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**“Where did you leave the Somali Language?” Language usage and identity of
Somali Males in America**

by

Ali Hassan

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

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Abstract

Research in second language teaching and learning has many aspects to focus on, but this paper will focus on the sociolinguistic issues related to language usage and identity. Language usage is the lens that is used to understand the identity of Somali males in America. Language usage in social contexts gives us the opportunity to learn the multiple identities of Somali males in America. Being multilingual and having multiple identities in America is a constant battle for Somali males in America. They are constantly negotiating identity on a day to day basis. The findings are based on three Somali males in America in their early '20s who are all enrolled in a 4-year institution in the Midwest. This study sheds light on the identity of Somali males in America through their language usage. This study finds that language learning is more than a simple linguistic system and signs, but it engages the identity of the learned. Language is the number one factor that makes someone Somali according to these participants. Somali males in America are caught between their American community and Somali community. They are not accepted fully in either community. They are too foreign for many Americans, and too American for their Somali community. The findings of this study hope to educate conscious citizens, policy makers, and educators in an effort to reduce, if not eliminate, stereotyping of Somali males in America. Through the language they use in their social settings, we have seen the many different identities they employ and negotiate in their daily lives. Somali males in America have a foot in each of their communities and are constantly figuring who they are.

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Chapter I: Introduction

A civil war broke out in Somali in the early 1990s. This full-scale civil war led to the Somali government being overthrown in 1991 by tribal militias. After the civil war, many Somalis fled the country to neighboring countries and any other country they had access to. America accepted many Somali refugees and relocated them in many parts of the country. According to the United States Census of 2010, there are 76, 205 Somali's living in America. The majority of them live in the following states: Atlanta, GA; Columbus, OH; Seattle, WA; and Minneapolis, MN (Gambino, Trevelyan, & Fitzwater, 2014, p. 1). Currently, there are 17,320 Somali residents in Minnesota. With this emerging population of immigrants comes a social, economic, and political backlash. This has led to serious concerns of fear, stereotypes, and discrimination from the host country due to their ignorance and lack of understanding that their ancestors were immigrants at one time. To illustrate their ignorance I would like to recall a recent incident, from November 9, 2015. A Somali woman was eating at a local restaurant in Minnesota, and she was viciously attacked. According to the criminal complaints the suspect attacked her because she "became upset they were not speaking English" (Collin, 2015). This type of attack demonstrates the fear that many Somali's have experienced. This type of attack also demonstrates the life of a Somali immigrant as one of a complex identity that includes language, race, and religion. Their complex and ever-shifting identities make Somali immigrants targets in America.

The purpose of this study is to analyze if there is a relationship between language usage and identity. The identity of Somali males in America has been under-researched. I feel obligated to conduct this research due to my linguistic background, ethnicity as a Somali,

and my gender as a male. The Somali community is an emerging population in the U.S. that needs a representative in the field of research. This community came to America with the same hopes and dreams that prior communities came with, including freedom, security, economic opportunity, and a better future. This study explores the identity of Somali males in America through the usage of their languages.

I, as a Somali, Muslim, Black, male and member of this community, will use my experience and observation of the phenomenon of language usage and identity of Somali males in America in this report. As needed I will interject my personal experience and observations at appropriate places to explain or elaborate Somali identity and language usage. As with any qualitative study, these observations and experiences are not intended to represent definitively the experience of all Somali males living in America. It is hoped, though, that results from this study will add to our understanding of the complex challenges, including language learning and identity that immigrants in America face on a day-to-day basis.

The foreseeable benefits that can come out of this study will create an understanding of the Somali male identity for policymakers, educators, and conscientious citizens. More specifically, teachers of English as a second language can learn about a few of the characteristics of this growing population. Policy makers can design a curriculum that reflects their student's identity, which will lead to more meaningful learning outcomes. For the conscientious citizen, he or she can learn that his or her Somali co-worker, classmate, or neighbor is an ally rather than an enemy. Educators can learn more about this growing population in order to serve. Perhaps this can lead to changes in the curriculum of the ESL

and aid to ESL instructors. In return, this will lead them into becoming a productive members of society.

When looking at the relationship between language usage and identity, it is important to look at how language describes identity, affirms identity, and ascribes identity. Language usage can identify a person in terms of what language this individual uses, and with whom he uses it with. Having a better understanding of the language usage of immigrants and minority group identities can help the host country understand immigrant needs and provide proper services.

Understanding the multilingualism and multiple identities of Somali males has the potential for a positive effect on the academic, emotional, and economic well-being of the males in question.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Identity

This study examines how language usage affects identity, specifically the identity of Somali males in America. Language and identity are intertwined. People are always developing emotionally, physically, mentally, and linguistically. These changes result in an identity change. As one goes through life, one's identity can change from a son, to a husband, and to a father. He takes on different identities at different times and places. Moreover, the language he uses in each of the roles influences his identity. Identity is a phenomenon that is constantly evolving and language influences this evolution.

We must first understand what identity is in order to understand how language affects it. There are three different schools of thought on identity: the essentialist, postmodern, and imagined communities. Identity has evolved in the context of these perspectives. The first school of thought to define identity was the essentialist, which states "The essentialist view of identity is grounded in a fixed set of shared characteristics or experience of members of an identity group (Moya & Hames-Garcia, 2000, p. 231). Here the essentialist view of identity is that of fixed characteristics such as race, gender, and ethnicity among other physical characteristics. For instance, if the individual is Black, Muslim, and male, then none of these characteristics will change, as they are static, according to the essentialist view. This view of identity covers what is apparent to the individual while it neglects what is hidden inside, such as the emotions and how language changes his identity in different times and places. The essentialist view on identity could be used for demographic purposes.

The second school of thought on identity is postmodernism. Those that ascribe to this philosophy view of identity as “one that decenters the individual, causing a shift from sheer subjectivity to an almost total loss of subjectivity” (Dumitrescu, 2001, p. 12). The postmodern view on identity continues as “identity is no longer viewed as singular and stable, but rather as plural and mutable, and ultimately impossible to grasp through the usual exercise of reason” (Dumitrescu, 2001, p. 12). Here is where the two schools of thought on identity differ. The postmodern view of identity is not static, but multi-faceted, unstable, constantly developing and growing, while the essentialist view of identity is static. One can be a Black, Muslim, and male but each situation is not limited to being only Black, Muslim, and male. He can be Black from Somalia, Ethiopia, Jamaica, or the United States for example. He can be a Muslim that is Sunni, Shia, Sufi; or a male that is a teenager, an adult, or a senior. His identity is constantly under construction and it changes with each role he becomes. The postmodern view of identity looks at an individual as a whole, not only the specific inherited characteristics such as race, gender, and ethnicity the essentialist sees. A person’s identity changes according to the social setting that he is in. The way a person behaves when he or she is with friends, colleagues, and superiors along with the setting whether it is public or private will change his or her behaviors. These changes in a social setting will also bring out the multiple identities an individual carries with him.

The third school of thought on identity, which is related to the postmodern view of multiplicity, is the imagined communities. This community is imagined “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”

(Anderson, 1991, p. 49). Here a person can be a member of a larger community or a nation in general, but his specific beliefs might not be aligned with the rest of the community. One can be an American while at the same time be a Muslim male. A Black Muslim male may encounter racism that the rest of the members of the predominately Christian nation will not encounter. This makes his allegiance different from the majority and rather it belongs to the imagined community that he wishes to be part of. In discussing identity and imagined communities, Kanno and Norton (2003) state, “Imagined communities refer to groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination” (p. 241). For example, my niece who was born in America but never traveled to Somalia but imagines herself to be part of the community in Somalia. People who are not fully accepted in their nation, such as Somali males in America, will only imagine communities where they have full membership. The rejection of the mainstream society and fear of Somali males can lead them to have these imagined communities in their mind. To summarize, imagined communities Norton (2010), states “thus in imagining themselves bonded with their fellow human beings across space and time, learners can feel a sense of community with people they have not yet met, including future relationships that only exist in a learners imagination” (p. 3). Norton (2010) also summarized imagined communities, they are imagined because they are “not immediately tangible and accessible” (p. 3), but they are a community because they share the same beliefs. This summary of imagined communities suits Somali males in America best. It gives them access to groups that they share a common experience with, and beliefs that the host country does not provide. This imagined community might share the same language, beliefs, and culture that the individual might not be able to

receive from his current community. The imagined community is wanted by the individual and he thinks he will be accepted.

The essentialist view concludes that identity employs physical and external characteristics. The postmodern view recognizes and describes the relationship between the internal, emotional, self-reflective, and external behavior in social contexts, which helps describe identity. Imagined communities validate the self-identifications of individuals by allowing them to imagine a community where they belong. The postmodern and imagined community philosophies define identity as a more holistic concept than the essentialist philosophy. These two views describe the shifting nature of identity rather than being static as the essentialist view would have us believe. The postmodern view does not neglect the essentialist view but expands external behavior to include internal.

This study looked at how language usage affected the identity of Somali males in social contexts. In this study, identity was viewed as Wenger (1998) describes, “the work of identity is always going on” (p. 154). Identity is always changing. Throughout life’s stages, individuals form and take on a different identity. Postmodern and imagined community philosophy fit in with Wenger’s concept of complex, multifaceted, constantly developing and renegotiating nature of identity. The imagined community interpretation informs us how an individual imagines living in harmony which is not available to them due to the space, and time that they are currently in. It is harmonious because, in this community, the members have the same beliefs, culture, and identity.

In this community, they are insiders and full members. This is why it is harmonious to them, but reality can be the opposite once they enter. Wenger (1998) sees imagined

communities as the “process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves” (p. 176). A person gets a chance to dream about a community where everybody is the same as him or her. It also gives them a chance to withdraw from reality, creating a process of producing this new and imagined community. Here, entering a community might be the easy part as one imagines everyone has the same view, habits, and way of life. It is like watching a movie and recognizing oneself in the struggle of the main character. Gaining entry to this community is difficult. Desire is easy, but acceptance as a full member requires a great deal of work. For example, my uncle immigrated to America during the Somali civil war in the early 1990s. He had imagined America to be a perfect place before he came. Upon settling in America, he realized it was a country full of racism, scarce opportunity (e.g., lack of employment training and educational opportunity), and a criminal justice system that overtly targets people of color.

The essentialist view neglects all these different attributes of identity and only looks at specific fixed characteristics of identity; such as gender, race, and ethnicity, and these traits would not suffice language usage. These categorizations make people powerless and confine them to one category. But identity is far more complex than fixed characteristics. If a Somali male applies for a job, he would mark his ethnicity as African American or Black. But he is more than a Black male. He is a Muslim, Somali, and a young male. Putting a check mark on the Black/African/American box will not fully show who he is. It can lead to misrepresentations of his identity. Identity is learned, negotiated, lived, and more complex than checking a box. For example, a Somali male who came to America at the age of 10 might not feel compelled to categorize himself as a Black, American male when he fills out job

applications or school census. This type of categorization strips him of his other identity as a Muslim, Somali, who is part of both the American and Somali culture. He has multiple identities within himself, which cannot be confined to one single category. Throughout his day, he is in many different situations that compel him to display one of his multifaceted identities as a bilingual and multi-cultural individual. A person's identity is undergoing formations and learning. Wenger (1998) divides the process of identity formation and learning into three categories which are "engagement, imagination, and alignment" (pp. 173-174). For example, a Somali male who engages to build a relationship with his Somali community, learns Somali history and displays his identity as a member of his community. By a making concerted effort to learn both Somali history and behaving in a way that is respectful of Somali culture, he is outwardly exhibiting a desire to be identified as Somali. He is also aligning himself with the Somali community by complying with their norms and not committing acts of shame, such as drinking alcohol in public. Through his engagement and alignment, he sees images of himself as a member of the Somali community, which gives him images of how he should view the world as the imagined community described above.

The postmodernism views and imagined communities are suitable for language usage as they are not static, just like language is not static. Norton and Toohey (2002) summarize correctly how language and identity are associated: Language learning engages the identities of learners because language itself is not only a simple linguistic system of signs and symbols; it is also a complex social practice in which the value of and meaning ascribed to the person who speaks (p. 115). Learning a new language can have a significant impact on an individual's identity. Now that they are in this new community, learning a new language will

help them build a new identity. Language becomes a key part of identity, because language is social practice.

When a language learner is in the host country, he will not be valued the same as he would if he were in an imagined community.

Language

Language and identity are intertwined. It is common for people to assume an individual's identity through their language usage. The usage of language might affirm a person's culture, values, and norms, or negate it if they make false claims about being a member of a community. Our language is our identity. It gives us a sense of belonging. Li (2007) explains further this notion of language and identity, "Through language we express our identity. People identify themselves and are identified through the language they use in expressing their cultural background, their affiliations, their attitudes and values" (p. 262). Since we are identified by others through the language we use and this language also expresses our culture, likewise Somali male's identity. We will look at how language affirms identity and how identities are changed by the choice of words they use.

Language choice. Language choice can be divided into four areas. Fishman (1965) distinguished them as

(a) Media Variance: Writing, reading, and speaking, (b) Role Variance: Degree of maintenance or shift may be quite different in conjunctions with more formal, less formal and intimate communication, (c) Situational Variance: Degree of maintenance or shift may be quite different in conjunction with more formal, less formal and intimate communication, and (d) Domain Variance: Degree of maintenance or shift may be quite different in each several distinguishable domains of language behavior. (p. 79)

The above categories of language choice help us understand the different language choices that are used in different settings, such as word choices, formality, or individual's behaviors. We hope to see in this study how these categories help us understand the identity and language usage of Somali males in America.

In this study, I focused on language usage for situational variance and membership to analyze Somali males' identity through language usage. In each instance, a person identifies with the different groups to which he belongs, wants to belong and to which he seeks acceptance. I looked at how Somali males' language usage depends on the situation they are in. For example, when a Somali male speaks to a woman that he is interested in he will use language that expresses romance to capture her attention. If the same male would speak to his grandmother, he will use the same language but this time it shows affection and respect. A Somali male will give compliments to his grandmother and a woman that he is interested for marriage with the same word of beauty in a different context. To his future soul mate, he will say "abaayo waa nuuraysaa" meaning "you are glowing with beauty" hence physical beauty external beauty. But to his grandmother, he will say "ayeeyo waa nuuraysaa" meaning "you are glowing with beauty" hence spiritual and internal beauty. Situations change our language usage and this change can expose one's identity. We will see how languages change to shape identity, and what language is used to create an identity in the results. Based on my observations I have seen how language choices among Somali males depends on who they are talking to, i.e., friends, family, elders, and in what context, i.e., in the home, at the market, or in school. In this study, I have examined these changes and seen them reflect the situations they are in. These changes might give us an insight into their identity. In these situations, they

are identified through their language use as well as their culture, attitude, and values. When looking at how language selection validates membership to a community, it is important to look at the language people prefer to speak, and with whom they speak it.

Bilingual's code-switch for a variety of reasons. One of these reasons is for gaining membership. They choose certain languages to show belonging to a specific group. For example, this group can be based on sex, race, gender, or religion. This group can also be based on shared ideologies, and identities. In this study, it is Muslim, Somali, American, and male. In each situation, the language a Somali male in America chooses will show his allegiance to a specific group. Fishman (1965) stated, "In each instance [a person] identifies with a different group to which he belongs, wants to belong, and from which he seeks acceptance" (p. 68). For example, a Somali male will carefully choose to speak Somali when he encounters Somali elders in his community. By making a conscious decision of the language he chooses, he is also highlighting his affiliations to the Somali community. Pearson, Losey, Pasquale, Bogart, and Anderson (2008) state "the social benefits of L1 maintenance also include the potential for adolescents to keep close links to the adults in their lives" (p. 77). I have encountered many cases where I was with a friend who spoke a different language than me. When he encountered another person, who spoke the same language that he did, he would speak that same language with his friend and I did not understand a word of their conversation. Whenever I am with a non-Somali and we encounter a Somali friend of mine in public I usually greet him in Somali. This sense of belonging to a community is only gained through the language that both parties share. Both parties speak to each other in their native tongue to show their membership in that community. I can recall times when I was

with my Saudi friend at restaurants and we would encounter a friend of mine who is Somali. I would greet him, speak to him in Somali, and then I would introduce both parties to each other in English. English is the common language for all of us and speaking is not only logical but polite.

Heller (1995) summarizes how code-switching indicates membership to a community and language choice magnifies identity “code-switching is a common phenomenon among bi- and multilinguals and is often touted as a particular, nonrandom, linguistic skill necessary for being a member of certain speech community” (pp. 158-174). In this case, Somali males switch between English and Somali to show their membership. In the case of Somali males in America, they are easily confused with African-Americans at school and in their neighborhoods and this will drive them to speak Somali to display their loyalty to the Somali community and dispel any confusion. Dewaele and Li (2014) state “identity and identification-code-switching can be strategically employed when the speaker wishes to show involvement, group membership, expertise, power, and also excluding someone who does not know the language” (p. 227). Hence code-switching can be a secret weapon. Meaning, if we want to exclude a third party from our conversation in a public restaurant, or if we want to show our belonging to our community, then we would switch between our native language and the host country language.

In the Somali community, there are rituals that require members to speak Somali to show their identity such as weddings, tribal affairs, and poetry recitations for special events. These require oral skills in the Somali language. These social events show the identity negotiations of Somali males in America. Some might not fully participate in these events due

to their limited linguistics skills of the Somali language. Bigelow (2008) quotes one of the Somali males she interviewed who believes “being Somali means speaking Somali” (p. 28). Here, this young man connects language and nationality. If one speaks Somali, he is Somali. Belonging to the community and being accepted requires one to speak the language. In the Somali community “the importance of oral language cannot be undermined in the Somali ethos” (Bigelow, 2010a, p. 53). The Somali language is conveyed through oral tradition. “Oral language in the forms of stories, dramas, jokes, riddles, proverbs, and poems, are centuries old” (Bigelow, 2010a, p. 35). This might be why speaking Somali is a criterion for this young man, as mentioned above. Knowing the Somali language, he can associate ethnicity and identity of being a Somali male. He has heard many stories, jokes, and poems in Somali that when he pictures a Somali person, he only thinks of a person that speaks Somali. The Somali language becomes one of the main criteria in defining who a Somali is. For example, I can recall a time when my roommates and I were at the Mosque to perform one of the five daily prayers. We were speaking English, and then an elderly man came to us and asked, “Where did you guys leave the Somali language?” Then he went on to lecture us about the importance of maintaining the Somali language and concluded that if you do not speak Somali, then you are not a Somali. The Mosque is part of the Somali community where there are interactions and community buildings. Here individuals get opportunities to highlight their affiliation with the Somali community. What the elder was bringing to our attention was that speaking the Somali language is the key to entering this community.

Communities of practice. Human beings are social creatures. Our lives depend on others and this dependency is the key to our survival. Each and everyone one of us belongs to

communities of practices. These communities of practices that we interact with teach us the fundamentals of life, such as our beliefs, values, and cultures. We construct our identity through this mutual engagement with our communities. Our belonging to our communities varies through the stages of involvement.

Wenger (1998) describes several layers of trajectories of community membership, which influences our identity. Wenger's trajectories are listed below.

Trajectories:

- Peripheral: By choice or by necessity, some trajectories never lead to full participation.
- Inbound: In the process of becoming a member. Identities are vested in future membership
- Insider: Identities are continuing to evolve through membership.
- Boundary: Maintaining membership in multiple communities and in turn linking communities.
- Outbound: Leaving a community and learning to view experience from a different perspective. (Wenger, 1998, pp, 154-155).

Now we can examine how these trajectories apply to Somali American males in America and how they construct their identity. A peripheral trajectory means an individual wants to be member, but he is not accepted for whatever reason. This peripheral stage constructs his identity as he comes to the realization that he might not be accepted as member. It is possible to come out of the peripheral but unlikely to be fully embraced. Not being a member diminishes his identity and he may not have the same privilege as the rest of the community.

In the case of Somali males in America, they know that they are members of the American community, but they are marginalized due to their religion, ethnicity, race, and possibly language. If one of them were to engage in the current political elections, his opinion may not have the same value as a white Anglo-Saxon Christian. Therefore his identity as an American diminishes. Even though he might have the political skills to give a knowledge-based opinion or run for any of the major offices in the state he may not be embraced. Thus, his identity as an American will not be fully embraced.

The Inbound trajectory is the process of becoming a member, and identities are vested in future membership. One takes initiative that will help him become a member of that community in the future. In the case of Somali males, they make a future investment in becoming a member of the American community. The first generation of the Somali community is the monolingual speakers, who are the elders in the community. They invest time and money in becoming citizens. They apply for citizenship and they study for the citizenship test by hiring tutors and interpreters. This future investment helps them become a member along with their grandchildren and helps them realize the imagined community they wish to be in. The hope is that their future grandchildren will be full members of the American community. The second generation of the Somali community is the economically active generation. Their sole purpose for investing in becoming a member of this community might be for economic purpose and social status. They make future investments such as seeking higher education, mastering the host language, and pursuing activities to become a full member of the community. I made many investments in becoming a member of the American society as a second-generation Somali community member. These investments

include the process of mastering the English language, playing varsity basketball in high school, and pursuing my Master of Arts degree in Teaching English as Second Language.

The insider trajectory is where full membership can be claimed, though identities are constantly evolving through membership. Somali males feel that they are not insiders in either community. They are not fully embraced as an American due to their religion, ethnicity, and culture. In the Somali community, they are seen as men who lost their identity and their culture's language skills. As mentioned earlier, the incident at the Mosque with my roommate and I demonstrated the tension between the trajectories and memberships. Here in our own Mosque, we thought we were insiders. However, the insider thought we were on the inbound trajectory because he perceived we were just making investments such as praying to become a full member. His statement suggests that the Somali language is changing to the direction of being lost in addition we can say that it can be found again. Likewise, identity can change, it can be retrieved like language. The same is true for Somali males in the American community. These males are in complex situations from both communities. In the American community, Somali males carry these characteristics, which make it hard to become an insider in the "American" community. These men are disqualified as insiders because they are Somali, Muslim, Black, and speak with an accent whenever they speak English in front of natives. These are some of the obstacles that keeps them from fully integrating into the American culture. For example, I have lived in America 22 years of my 30-year life but based on name, faith and etc. am still not consider an American.

Boundaries are actions individuals perform to maintain membership and links with multiple communities. Somali males in America constantly perform actions to maintain

membership in the Somali and American community. The actions they perform to be a membership in this community includes attending prayers in the mosque frequently and professing their cultural identity by ascribing to it whenever asked, where are you from? The majority of Somali males prefer to play basketball over soccer to maintain their membership in the American community. They prefer to play basketball because it is more available than soccer and is more popular than soccer in playgrounds and parks. In addition, they make other investments such as learning English, seeking higher education, and becoming politically active. They are constantly negotiating with respect to each community at the individual and community level. Maintaining and identifying with both communities across boundaries is one of the most delicate and challenging element for these individuals. This trajectory helps Somali males keep their multiple identities and communities. By maintaining close ties with both communities, these males can bridge the gap between the two communities to which they belong. Even though they might not be an insider in either community, their maintenance of membership might strengthen ties between their communities.

The Outbound trajectory is when a person leaves his community and learns views and experience from a different perspective. This trajectory can lead an individual out of his community. The desire to leave the community might lead to oppositional behavior. According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), "Oppositional behavior", which states that a member of the minority group "wants to assimilate in the dominant social culture" (pp. 176-206). In this trajectory, an individual makes a conscious decision to deny and leave his community permanently. Upon leaving his community, he develops a new relationship and learns views that are extremely different from his original community. In this trajectory, that

person wants to rebel and establish his new-found identity. One might change his faith, deny his heritage language, or claim to be a different race to fit in with the host community. Some Somali parents might tell their children not to speak Somali at school for fear of harassment, as well as the perception that speaking Somali might have a negative effect on their child's education. Communities of practice are full of trajectories that shape our identities. In this report, identity was viewed as a work in progress. Per Wenger (1998), "the work of identity is always going on" (p. 154.). And these trajectories are constantly changing along with our identities.

Oppositional behavior. People usually choose the language they speak to show membership to a community and to be different from the majority. But there are those who are in the minority group in the immigrant community that wants to be part of the majority, the popular community. Those with "Oppositional behavior" want to assimilate in the dominant social culture (Bashir-Ali, 2006, p. 629). These people are making conscious decisions to abandon their mother tongue to be accepted by the natives. Bashir-Ali (2006) found in "oppositional behavior desire to be part of the collective social identity, and to assimilate into the dominant social culture at school" (pp. 629-632). In this case, study Bashir-Ali (2006) found her participant Maria "chose AAVE [African American Vernacular English] and rejected SAE [Standard American English] to avoid the risk of sounding white" (p. 633). In this context, we have someone who is learning English as a second language who decided to not learn Standard Academic English for fear of rejection from her peers. Having to speak Standard English in school was not popular and it might have caused her to be an outcast.

From this study, we find that pressure to assimilate can cause people to deny the language of their culture.

We have seen from the above research that identity asks “Who am I” and here we have an individual who chose to deny who she is. It seems possible that some Somali males practice oppositional behavior; I remember in high school there was a Somali male who always pretended to be an American from Chicago. Awad El Karim (1999) reports on young African refugees who emulate the language and style of what he called “Black Style English (BSE) and popular black culture” (p. 351). Black style English is also known as African American English Vernacular, which has the same grammatical structure like Standard English. Popular culture influenced these young refugees from Africa to learn BSE [Black Standard English] to be part of this Black popular culture. Somali males use Black Style English instead of Standard English to belong to the Black American community in school. Bigelow (2011) quotes a Somali elder male who is concerned that their youth are “acting black” (p. 35), meaning in their language usage, dress code, taste in music, and choice of friends they resemble African-Americans. This resemblance results in a loss of language, culture, and identity by the Somali elders. The assimilation of Somali youth into the American culture and forgetting of their own culture, can be seen in many parts of their lives. The elders in the Somali community wish to instill in their youth proper culture and language to preserve their identity. Bashir-Ali (2006) found one of her participants who was Mexican “chose African-American vernacular English and rejected Standard Academic English to avoid the risk of sounding white” (p. 633). Maria made a conscious decision to use AAEV as her language for membership in this community. Maria chose to be in the outbound sphere from

her community by denying her ethnicity as a Mexican to place herself on an inbound or inner trajectory of the American Community. Leaving her community cost the opportunity to learn Standard Academic English. Being a teen and minority is not an easy task. Some fall to peer pressure more than others. The above cases affirm our understanding of what an identity is, which is always a work-in-progress. Additionally, these trajectories are interconnected on a continuum.

Bilingualism. In a monolingual society like America, bilingualism is diminishing. Acquisition and applications of native language for immigrants diminishes with each generation. Languages of immigrant communities may die-out with time. One of the causes of language loss is “language shift [which] is determined by internal changes within language communities themselves” (Crawford, 1996, p. 53). Internal changes come from the attitude of members of the community. Individuals are putting their self-interest ahead of the interest of the community. Learning English becomes a priority due to economic upward mobility for these individuals. In the Somali family, parents put a lot of emphasis on their children learning English. These children become the breadwinners and the main interpreters for their families. Within the community people become pragmatic in that they understand that English is the language of opportunity in the United States; thus, they have no interest in preserving the Somali language. They might only think about what works for them at that moment. The instant gratification of learning English and being an independent worker, outweighs the community need of preserving their heritage language.

What also drives language loss internally for the Somali people is time. The desire to preserve the Somali language becomes hard when you have bills to pay and mouths to feed.

Being a working immigrant in a low paying job without any security can put a lot of stress on Somali parents. If we look closely, we notice that all bilingual speakers are not the same. As Milroy and Muysken (1995) state “Not all people who are bilingual are the same”, and “bilingualism in migrant communities differs” (p. 2). Additionally, they state “characteristically, it spans three generations, the oldest speakers sometimes being monolingual in the community language, the economically active generation being to varying degrees bilingual but with greatly different levels of competence in the host language, while children born in the host community may sometimes be virtually monolingual in the host language” (p. 2).

Currently, in the Somali community in the United States, these same three generations exist. The monolingual Somali speakers in the community tend to be the tribal leaders of the tribe and community. They apparently make no attempts to learn the host language, English. They brought their beliefs and culture with them when they immigrated. They seem themselves as the guardians of the Somali language. They feel if they were to learn English, the Somali language will die. Some may have no desire to learn English but were forced to partially learn it to obtain their citizenship. The second generation is the economically active generation. These are working adults and college students who understand that learning English has great economic and social benefits. This generation has a desire to learn English. The last generation is the children who are born in America and their language skills in Somali and English will depend on their household’s ideology on bilingualism.

The participants in this study are in the second group, the economically active generation. These participants have multi-lingual skills and the multiple identities of being

Muslim, Black, and Somali. Because of their language skills, which is similar to what Milroy and Muysken (1995) describe “sometimes two languages rather than one can act as group membership symbols to demonstrate ethnic identity” (p. 24), the second-generation males are members of the American and Somali community. In the case of the Somali American citizens in this study, Somali is the home language used for everyday interactions, whereas English marks membership to the professional community in the classroom and the workforce. At times, they are in the inbound trajectory of the American community during school days. This is the time they make their investment into learning English to brighten their future. Being bilingual puts individuals in boundary communities where they are code-switching throughout their conversations with other members of their community.

Code-switching. One of the central issues in bilingualism is code-switching. Milroy and Muysken (1995) state “code-switching is the use of two or more languages by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversations” (p. 7). There are two main types of code-switching (1) “intra- sentential occurs within the sentence (p. 2) and “inter-sentential occurs between sentences” (p. 8). For example, within a conversation you state your first sentence in Somali, then your following sentence is in English. A hypothetical example of this would be when Abdulahi’s friend was explaining to him what finance is. His friend started to describe money in Somali then stated the following words: payment, principal, and interest in English between sentences. Another example is when he Abdulahi was at a Somali restaurant he naturally ordered his food in English. Before he finished his sentence he said, “I need malawax, bur, suqaar, samboosa” in Somali before he finished his sentence. Here is transcript:

Interviewer: How do you order your food at Somali restaurants?

Abdullahi: You know English is natural to me.

Interviewer: Ok continue.

Abdullahi: when am in the restaurant the and the waiter guys comes to me English just comes out, I would say can I have Chicken rice and Samboosa,

Interviewer: Why do you say Samboosa in Somali but you don't say chicken and rice in Somali.

Abdullahi: Chicken and rice are available in English but Samboosa, Suqaar, and malawax are not available in English.

Interviewer: I see, since these words are not available to you in English you automatically say it in Somali before you finish your sentence.

Abdullahi: yes, cuz I can order everything else in English. I Interviewer: Thank you. In this study, I had examined the code-switching styles for the purpose examining the relationship between identity development and language usage for membership affirmation or negation to a community.

There are two different views on code-switching presented by Milroy and Muysken (1995). The first view on code-switching was that it represented “deficient knowledge of language, a grammarless mixture of two codes” (p. 9). The second view states “Language alteration is conceptualized not as a deficit to be stigmatized, but as an additional resource through which a range of social and rhetorical meanings are expressed” (p. 9). The view that we followed in this study is the latter, of which code-switching, represents an element in which socially agreed on cues in conversations are used by speakers to build identity in the home and acquired languages. Code-switching is an asset to bilingual speakers and gives these individuals the ability to critically think and analyze issues from multiple perspectives.

Code-switching gives bilinguals opportunity to practice both of their languages in conversations. In summary Gumperz (1982) suggests that bilingual speakers use code-switching to express social and linguistic meanings during conversation. By switching between the two languages an individual is affirming his multiple identities. It is believed that language usage is the main identifier in identity as Sarkar and Winer (2006) states “ethnic identity is constructed by virtue of uttering mixed codes, if there is no mixed utterance, there

is not mixed identity” (p. 188). For the multilingual person, where code-switches occur, identity is developing along with language. The key to code-switching and mixing identity is using both languages to some degree to display both identities. Somali American males switch between English and Somali during their conversations, or use Somali/English words between utterances and sentences as I have observed in the community. This interchanging between English and Somali during conversation displays the multiple identities Somali males have. It also reflects the multiple communities they belong to. Language choice defines adherence to group values and sets the limits between those who can speak the language and those who cannot. This ascription of identity to languages is one of many reasons why people code-switch. As Wenger (1998) previously stated, identity is a work in progress which includes engagement with identity. During code-switching individuals are engaging their multiple identities and professing their alignment with their different communities.

Language loss. As a consequence of migration and use of the host language, immigrant communities are losing their language. One of the causes of language loss is immigrant communities adopting the rules and culture of the host country. This new immigrant is in the peripheral trajectory as they are leaving their community out of necessity. When adopting the rules and culture of their host country the individual places himself in the inbound trajectory. Crawford (1996) argues “if language choices reflect social and cultural values, language shift reflects a change in these values” (p. 51). The internal change often comes from the attitude of the members of the community. Individuals put their self-interest ahead of the interest of the community. Learning English becomes a priority due to economic upward mobility for these individuals. In the Somali community, parents put strong emphasis

on their children learning English. These children become the breadwinners, and the main interpreter for the family. Within the community people become concerned about what works for them rather than preserving the heritage language. This puts them in the outbound trajectory, and they are changing their values from collectivistic to individualistic. They have little interest in preserving the Somali language. The value of the Somali language declines, when people have this type of attitude. Outwardly, this is seen in the social interactions of the Somali youth. While on a road-trip with my Somali friends, we spoke English throughout the trip. Likewise, the daily conversations between my roommates and I are in English even though we are all Somali. We have the linguistic skills of English, but not Somali and therefore, we speak English. These changes occur at the individual and at a community level.

Individuals in the Somali community make conscious decisions to learn English knowing that it is instantly useful as it will help them become independent workers. This sentiment puts them in the outbound trajectory due to their oppositional behavior. Values and attitudes are changing along with acquiring this new language. This also outweighs the community responsibility of preserving the Somali language. If this trend continues, the Somali language will lose importance and speakers with time.

What also drives this shift are internal changes within the Somali community. These changes include host country assimilations, seeking higher education, involvement in host community and being politically active. With these changes in the Somali community, the Somali language has declined. The desire to preserve the Somali language is outweighed by the economic gains of speaking English. It becomes hard for Somali families to invest time in teaching Somali to their children when they must worry about bills to pay and plenty of

mouths to feed. Immigrants tend to have lower income than natives and work longer hours. Gans (2013) states “average household income for immigrant household is lower than that of native households” (p. 3), she also states immigrant households have average incomes between 75% and 95% of that native households in the United States (p. 9). Teaching Somali to their children might not be feasible due to their limited linguistic skills and lack of time.

Another source of language loss is language shift “language shift is determined by internal changes within language communities themselves” (Crawford, 1996, p. 50). As the Somali community shifts from the Somali language to English, they risk losing their heritage language. The shift and the loss of language go together. These internal changes include factors related to demographics, economics, and mass media. Out of these three internal changes in the Somali community economic factors are the main cause of the declining use of the Somali language. Employment, education, and commerce opportunities are more accessible to those that are fluent in the English language. This situation is worsened when a country is in recession.

The second group of bilinguals is the economically active ones. This group sees the economic benefits necessary to learning the host language. I, as a Somali male, have invested time and money in learning English. I can read, write, and speak English at a college level. Although I can speak Somali, I cannot write nor read Somali: my native language. It is my native language because that was the first language my parents taught me. I did not have the opportunity to be educated in the Somali language, and therefore, I cannot read or write. When I was learning English in elementary school, one thing that motivated me was the idea of becoming a doctor. It became clear that English was the key to learning medicine in the

United States. Therefore, I prioritized English to secure my future, while neglecting my native language.

The first generation of Somali immigrants required a different level of English skills. They needed enough proficiency in the language to pass the citizenship test. This generation came to America during the civil war in Somalia. Many of them were the parents and grandparents of the second generations. These elders had little desire to learn English, beyond what was required by immigration. In this case, they want to be in the inbound of the American society and they make investments to learn English due to their future membership of holding United States citizenship. For instance, my own mother had little desire of learning English, but she spent countless hours memorizing all the questions for her citizenship test. Now she holds a U.S. passport, and she travels between Somalia and America freely. Even though the first generation of Somali immigrants had little desire to learn English, they hoped to become full citizens in America. In contrast, the second generation of Somali immigrants desired to become full citizens.

The demographic factor is that many Somali people have immigrated to America in early 1990s. Some may have decided not to assimilate. This decision was influenced by their background. They were parents, who had no English skills and worked in low-paying jobs. They were the dominant ethnicity in Somalia but became a minority in the United States. What also influenced their decision of not learning English might be that they are the only ones in their homes who are fluent in Somali.

The last group of the bilingual community is the children born in the host community and raised by immigrant parents. These children might be monolingual in the host country

language. In this case, it might be that Somali children born in America might only speak English. As for these children, they attend schools, and their parents work in English environments. English thus become the common language in their daily lives. These children see themselves on the boundary trajectory between two communities. They are not insiders in their American and Somali communities. They maintain both identities on crossing into both insider trajectories when they need to. They attend American schools to participate in the American community. Since these children are Somali, they also participate in the Somali community by attending the mosque and studying the Quran.

These children are losing their heritage language due to the influence of English. What contributes to the loss of the Somali language are the following: television, video games, and social media, which can influence their language choice. Just like any language learner, when an individual gets exposure to the target language from locals, social media, and schools, it influences their language usage which may result in language loss. From the media, they are acquiring English and practicing it with their friends and family. For example, my nieces and nephews were not able to speak Somali at all. Most of the day they were in school speaking English; at home they were doing homework and watching television in English. Their neighbors with whom they played were non-Somali. Due to these circumstances, we could send them back to Somalia to learn the language, culture, and develop their identity. Many families might not have the same financial resource as we did to send their children back home, or to hire Somali tutors.

In any immigrant population in a host country, heritage language declines with each generation. In America, economic opportunity is likely the number one cause of language loss, along with social, and cultural belief changes within communities.

In conclusion, there are many pressures immigrant populations face. They initially share very little with the host country. The Somali community faces the same challenges with their culture, language, and religion that prior immigrant communities in America have faced. The racism and linguicism, of America, challenges the identity of the Somali community. These struggles challenge their identities daily and they are caught between two communities that they want to belong to the melting pot of this country called America, and their Somali heritage. For this report, I will be looking at the identity and language usage of Somali males in America. The theories of identity are used in this report are postmodern and imagined communities. I also want to look at how Somali Americans can be American citizens without compromising their identity, religion, culture, and their heritage language while still being accepted as full citizens by the host country. I am also interested in this community as I am a member. This community is under-researched and it is befitting that a member of this community conducts this research.

Research Questions

1. In what ways do Somali immigrants use their languages to identify with the various communities in America?
2. In what contexts do Somali American men use their various languages?

Chapter III: Methodology

Using the appropriate method for a study in a second language acquisition is important. The method selected must be able to answer the research question. In this study, I have used a qualitative method to analyze how language usage and identity of Somali males in social contexts is shaped. Qualitative research is a methodology in which the focus is on naturally occurring phenomena and the data are primarily recorded in non-numerical form (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 363). From the different forms of qualitative research, I chose to use Critical Discourse Analysis for data elicitations, which states “a program of social analysis that critically analyzes discourse” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p, 164). This method was chosen for the purpose of analyzing language usage as a means to address and understand identity. This method gave me an opportunity to study identity and language in a natural environment. This method has helped me delve into the inquiry of identity and language usage of Somali males. Data were collected in a natural human setting. Qualitative research gave me the opportunity to study the unknown and interpret the effect of language on identity.

As a method, I have used a qualitative case study. A case study is a detailed description of a single case, for example, an individual learner or a class within a specific population and setting (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 351). Duff further explains case study by stating “Case studies in applied linguistics have contributed substantially to theories and models such as language development, learner motivation and identity, and teacher cognition and development (Duff, 2014, p. 2). This study fulfilled the requirement for a case study. I have studied the language usage and identity of three Somali males in social context.

Participants

The participants of this study are three Somali males who are in a four-year college/university in the Midwest. The ages of the participants are between 18 and 30 years old. All three participants have lived in America for 10 years or more, who are currently in college. They have lived in cities that have prominent Somali communities. They live in households where Somali and English are spoken. All participants are fluent in speaking and listening in both languages, English and Somali. Participants have non-Somali friends outside of the Somali community. The above criteria have facilitated ideal candidates that were in many different social contexts to display both of their identities. The above criteria gave them many opportunities to use both the Somali language and English to code-switch. Participants attend the Mosque regularly for Friday prayers. All participants have ties to the Somali community. Such that they live in the community, shop at local Somali Malls, eat at local Somali restaurants, and hang out at Somali coffee shops. They had plenty of opportunities to initiate conversations with family, friends, and colleagues in school and outside of school. Participants also use Somali and English languages with friends and family members in public and private spaces. All participants have fully participated in conversations about school, work, religious practices and beliefs, and personal matters with friends and family members while using both languages. Participants currently live with their family. Language usage was the primary means of looking identity.

Those who relatively showed equal language usage of both languages Somali and English were chosen. These criteria were systematically designed to capture individuals who

are bilingual in English and Somali and who have multiple identities. All names are pseudonyms.

Table 1.1

Demographic

Name	Age	Residency	Marital status	Education	Length of Residence
Abdirahman	29	Midwest city	Single	Graduate	23 years
Farah	22	Midwest city	Single	Undergraduate	16 years
Abdulahi	22	Midwest city	Single	Undergraduate	10 years

Table 1.2

Self-reported Language Proficiency

Name	Somali				English			
	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
Abdulahi	Somewhat fluent	Somewhat fluent	Fluent	Fluent	Proficient	Proficient	Fully proficient	Fully proficient
Farah	Somewhat proficient	Somewhat proficient	Fully proficient	Fully proficient	Proficient	Proficient	Fully proficient	Fully proficient
Abdirahman	Somewhat proficient	Least proficient	Proficient	Proficient	Fully proficient	Fully proficient	Fully proficient	Fully proficient

Materials

The first phase I used was a written survey. The survey had demographic questions, language competence in English, Somali, and identity questions (see Appendix A). Before and after the survey I asked questions in Somali and English to assess their language skills and code-switching. The purpose of this was to eliminate participants who failed to meet certain criteria and select ones that surpassed the expected above criteria. Indeed, I had chosen three participants who met my criteria. I chose a survey because a “survey is a means of gathering information about a particular topic, for example, attitudes or opinions” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 367). The purpose of the survey was to identify potential participants for the

in-depth interview and the 24-hour interview. From this, survey participants stated their opinions and attitudes on language usage and identity.

The second phase was a language log. This language log had five categories (1) Language spoken, (2) Topic, (3) Time, (4) Place, and (5) Reason why they chose to speak in that language (see Appendix B). Participants kept track of their language usage for 1 day (see Appendix B). Participants received three text messages a day reminding them to fill out their language log. The purpose of the language log was to have transparency between what participants say they did and what they actually did. This gave me an estimate of the amount of code-switching that they did in their daily lives and additionally, their language usage in general. I also tracked my own code-switching and I compared myself with all three participants. As a member of the Somali community, I have an idea of places for social gathering. Prior to identifying participant's language usage, I observed the general Somali population to get an account of their language usage in different social contexts. As a field worker, I have documented in my personal notebook everything that I have observed in these social gatherings.

In this observation, I focused on language changes between Somali and English. I have used this observation to give me an awareness of their language usage in social context from the language log and used it for the rest of the phases, "researchers systematically observe different aspects of a setting in which they are immersed, including for example actions and events in which learners engage" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 361). These observations prior to the interview gave me a better understanding of the participants. After analyzing the survey and the observation, I had a better understanding of my participant's

identity and language usage and the contexts in which the various languages were used. This prior knowledge about my participants aided me in my oral interviews.

For the third phase, I conducted a 24-hour interview, “an interview is comparable to questionnaire, but in oral mode (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p.358). I chose to interview my participants about their 24-hour activity as it was easy to capture an accurate recall of their language usage for one day rather than 3 days. During the interview, I asked my participant’s what they did from the time they wake up until they went to sleep, through hour-by-hour reflections of their day. I continued to ask more details about the specific times they code-switched between Somali and English.

The last phase, I used included a structured interview. During the interview, I asked my participants open-ended questions, “an open-ended question will allow respondents to express their own thoughts and ideas in their own manner, and thus may result in more unexpected and insightful data” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 93). The purpose of the interview was to understand how language usage constructs identity in different social contexts. The structure of the interview was all in English. The interview was also recorded and transcribed later, “a structured interview resembles verbal questionnaire and allows researchers to compare answers from different participants” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 173). During the interview, I asked the following questions:

- *Is there anything that you can describe in Somali but you are not able to describe in English?*
- *Is there anything that you can describe in English but you are not able to describe in Somali? And why?*
- *Is it easier or more difficult to talk about emotional topics in Somali or English language? If there is a difference, could you tell me about it and perhaps provide some examples?*

- *What language do you feel safe speaking in the following area's (a) Airport, (b) School,*
- *(c) Mosque, (d) Malls? See Appendix C, for more details of the questions.*

Procedures

I sent an email to the Somali Student Association in a Midwest university. In this email, I introduced myself to the president of the SSA and explained the logistics of the thesis. The president kindly accepted my request to use his fellow Somali students for my thesis. After getting the approval from the Somali Student Associations at the local university, I started sending mass emails to the members to solicit participants. Pilot testing was used, “a pilot study is generally considered to be a small-scale trial of the proposed procedures, materials, and methods, and sometimes also includes coding sheets and analytic choices” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 41). I also solicited students at the cross-cultural center, library, and the school gym. The target was to gather as many participants as possible to complete the initial survey. For those who accepted my invitation via email and completed the survey (see Appendix A), and those who completed the survey in person, I looked at both of their surveys. Based on the answers from the surveys and their answers to the questions in Somali and English, I selected three participants for the survey, the 24-hour interview, the language log, and the structured interview. I studied these participants carefully for a few weeks. Their language usages and identities were analyzed carefully. The structured interview and the 24-hour interview were conducted individually face-to-face in an environment where participants felt at ease as much as possible. The interviews were conducted in the local library in a study room. The interviews lasted for 45 minutes to an hour. English was the only language in which the researcher and participants were fully fluent. All the interviews and surveys were

conducted in English. Upon the completion of the 24-hour interview, the structured interview was conducted. Refreshments were provided to all participants, but they all politely declined. The purpose of providing the refreshment was to make the environment socially comfortable.

Chapter IV: Results

Language Log: Participant #1

Table 2.1

Language Log: Participant #1

Pseudonyms: Farah

How long have you lived in America: 16 years.

Level of Education: Some Bachelor?

Date: 6/1/2016

DATE/TIME	Language	Topic	Setting	Reason
8AM	English	Haircut	Barber	Barber can't speak Somali
9am	Somali	Groceries	Somali grocery store	Cashier spoke to in Somali
10am	Somali	Family	Home	Talked to mom about events in Somalia
12pm	English	Buying clothes	Mall	My friend speaks English most of the time
2-5pm	Somali	Picking up a family member from the airport	Relatives house	They were my elders. I speak Somali with them
5-10pm	English	Trip over-seas	Relatives house and airport	The younger relatives I speak with them Somali and sometimes they mix English and Somali.

Results from Farah. The results from the language log were the following: Farah used Somali and English throughout his day equally. He spoke Somali with his elders and English with younger Somalis. Code-switching occurred for him when he was describing and planning a trip overseas and the times he spoke with his younger relatives.

Language Log: Participant #2

Table 2.2

Language Log: Participant #2

Pseudonyms: Abdirrahman.

How long have you lived in America: 23 years

Level of Education: Master

Date: 6/24/16

DATE/TIME	Language	Topic	Setting	Reason
9-10:40am	Somali	Old days in Somali	Home	Grandmother doesn't speak English. She was telling me how Somalia use to be
11-11:30am	English	Gas	Gas station	The cashier only spoke English
11:30-12:45pm	Somali	Plans for the day	Home	Spoke Somali to my mother. She is more comfortable in Somali. So we speak Somali
1-1:30pm	Somali	Friday sermon	Mosque	The Imam delivered the sermon in Somali. Afterward I greeted the congregation in Somali Sic they were Somali
2-3pm	English/Somali	Pre-dinner planning	Conference call	When describing food it is easier in English than Somali. English for the location and directions for the place. My friends and I use both languages to communicate.
3-6pm	English	Catching up with my little nephews and nieces	My Sister's house	Spoke English to my nephew and nieces because they don't speak Somali at all.
7-10pm	English/Somali	Dinner	Restaurant	My friends and I are fluent in Somali and English so we switch between both languages

Results for Abdirahman. Results from the language usage can be divided into three categories which are speaking Somali, speaking English, and speaking both English/Somali. Throughout his day, he used all three. He used Somali to speak with his elderly grandmother and his mother. He used English to speak with his younger nephews and nieces. He also used English and Somali with his friends, code-switching between English and Somali at the restaurant.

Language Log: Participant #3

Table 2.3

Language log: Participant #3

Pseudonyms: Abdullahi

How long have you lived in America: 10yrs

Level of Education: Some Bachelors.

Date: 6/13/2016

DATE/TIME	Language	Topic	Setting	Reason
10am	English/Somali	Football	Home	My friend and I speak Somali and English
12pm	English/Somali	Back pain	Home	Same as above
1pm	English/Somali	Debating the who is the best basketball player in the world	Home	Same as above
3pm	English/Somali	Money	Home	Same as above
5pm	English/Somali	News	Home	Same as above
7om	Somali	Family	Home	My mother only speaks Somali
9pm	English/Somali	Family/Relatives	Home	I speak Somali with the elders in my family and English with the younger ones.

Results from Abdullahi. The results from the language log show that Abdullahi used Somali and English throughout his day since as he was with his friend. He used purely English to speak with his younger relatives and Somali language to speak with his mother and older relatives.

The overall results from the language log is that Somali males use English to speak with younger relatives, Somali with elders and they code-switch between English and Somali with their friends. All three participants' language choice was dictated by the age of the recipient's. Code-switching included pre-dinner planning, trip overseas, sports, and back pain. They also spoke Somali with their parents and in their homes.

Looking at all three of these participants we can see that they used Somali in their homes with their elders. In these places they feel the safe speaking Somali. They spoke

Somali with their elders due them not speaking English and showing them respect. As for English, they spoke with their younger relatives as this is the only means of communicating with them. A major part of their life in America requires them to code-switch as social life and leisure's. They code-switch in these areas as since they do not know vocabulary to describe them in Somali

Results from the 24hr interview from all three participants are as follows.

- All three participants stated that they had stronger command of the English language than in Somali, in all four components of language (speaking, reading, listening, and writing).
- All three participants made conscious decisions to speak English with Somali children instead of Somali, and speak Somali to elders in the community.
- All three participants speak Somali with their parents, in order to relate to them, and it is also the norm in their homes.
- All three participants spoke (phrases, proverbs, expressions and jokes) in Somali. These speech acts wouldn't make sense if translated into English and it would not flow naturally. These jokes are inside jokes known in the Somali community. There is connotation behind them and if you do literal translation the person would be lost since he is an outsider, likewise the same for some of the English phrases.
- They all knew words in English, but they did not know them in Somali and vice versa. These are the English words they knew but did not know the Somali equivalent: Country, Law, Following orders, Sodas, certain foods in English, Deserts, Principal, Payment, Startups, Small Business, Deadlift, Bench Press, Lat, Pull Down, Whining, Traveling, Flopping, and Crying about calls whenever they play basketball. The following words were known in Somali but not in English Malawax, Samboosa, Bur, Suqaar, which are all Somali foods.
- All three participants wanted to improve their Somali skills and made conscious efforts to improve over the summer. One made it a goal for the summer to improve his Somali by speaking to his mother and also learning Somali Poetry. He connected language to identity and being an insider by speaking it (Abdulah Sharif). Abdurrahman made it a goal to speak Somali to his friends and improve as he deems it important for his future career and Farah said he wants to learn Somali to have a better understanding of his culture, and he is speaking more often with the elders nowadays.

The results from the 24-hour interview are as stated above for all three participants. All three participants had stronger command of the English language than the Somali language.

Their language choice was influenced by the age of the recipient of their conversation, they used Somali for poems, proverbs, jokes, Somali foods and they used English for things they learned in English such as academic terminology. They all wanted to improve their Somali and have a good command of the Somali language.

All three participants used English for the following categories; sports, business and certain food that is not translatable to the Somali language .They know these things in English due to them growing up in America. Living in America has given them an opportunity to participate sports in school and at home watch sports on television. In this way they come familiar with terms that are used in sports in English only. As for business words they hear them in school and work. But for some of the food that they only know in English might be that they have not learned it in Somali or due to their limited knowledge in the Somali language they might not be able to translate or this type of food is exclusively for Americans and is not part of the Somali diet.

Results from the structured interview from all three participants.

- What language do you intend or hope to teach your children: All participants said the Somali language.
- Do you think the Somali language is threatened or in danger of being lost? All participants said: Yes.
- What factor contributes to your measurement of someone being consider a Somali? All participants stated the following measurements: Somali language, Culture, and Tradition
- Is there anything that you can describe in Somali, but you are not able to describe it in English? Yes, Poetry, Proverbs, Traditions and Culture, and why? Also is there anything that you can describe in English but you are not able to describe it

in Somali? And why? Yes, Education and Work. Because these things I only know them in those languages.

- List the places where you wish you could speak Somali but the Somali language was not available: Restaurants, Schools, Stores, Malls, Grocery stores, inside classrooms, with professors who don't speak Somali. And why do you wish you could speak Somali in these places? I couldn't order my meal, to help you understand subjects in school, I feel more comfortable speaking Somali.
- What topics do you speak in Somali only? Proverbs, Jokes, Traditions, and Culture. And what topics do you speak in English only: Education, Academics.
- Describe places where you feel safe speaking Somali? Home, Mosque and what language do you not feel safe in speaking in these places? Sometimes in the malls, non- Somali places.

The overall results from the structured interview were that all three participants agreed on 7 of the 12 questions. The above questions and answers are what they all had in common.

All participants stated clearly that they all wanted to teach Somali to their children and believe that the Somali language is in danger of being lost. They also stated that they feel safe

speaking Somali in their homes, mosque and did not feel safe speaking Somali in malls and places that are not Somali owned. The topics that they could only speak in Somali were

proverbs, jokes, traditions and culture and the topics that they could only discuss in English were education and academics. The places they wished to speak Somali but Somali was not

available to them were the following: restaurants, schools, stores, malls, and grocery stores.

The results from the language log, 24hr interview, and structured interview are as stated

below. What I found is the following:

- Their multilingualism is intertwined with multiple identities
- They code-switched throughout the day
- Preservation of the Somali language is important
- They want to teach Somali to their children
- Knowing the Somali language is essential to being Somali
- Somali is used for culture, tradition, and food
- English is used for academics and public life
- Language choice was dictated by age, location, and topic

As for the research questions which are (1) In what ways do Somali immigrants use their languages to identify with various communities in America? (2) In what contexts do Somali American men use their various languages? I will answer them by closely examining the following themes (a) culture, traditional and language influence on Identity of the Somali males, (b) preservation of the Somali language, (c) Somali language vs English language, (d) investment in language is an investment in identity, and (e) motivations. All three participants were born in Somali but raised in America. These young men are constantly figuring out who they are. Their identity along with their languages is evolving. Interviewing them gave me insight into who they are. All three of them had many similarities in their life.

First, all three of them took pride in preserving the Somali language as they realized their language is in danger of being lost. They all wanted to teach their children Somali first. This pride in preserving their language might come from their culture which is patriarchy society.

And they as the men of their future households feel that it is incumbent upon them to carry the language of their forefathers and pass it down to their children. They also believed that knowing the Somali language is the key to being a Somali. Knowing the language makes one an insider. Hence the Somali culture can only be understood by speaking the language. All three participants stated that whenever they want to describe the Somali culture, tradition, jokes, proverbs, and foods they can only describe it in Somali. All of these have significant meaning in the Somali language that will be lost if translated into English. Here they are trying to solidify the identity of Somali and maintain it. From this I realized how conscious they are about their identity. Also, they live in America which requires them to maintain the

English language for work and education. For this reason, they speak English only in public places such as work and school. Additionally, they feel safe speaking English in public rather than Somali. They are multilingual and multi-identity. They live in two different communities. They enter one leave the other throughout their day which shapes their identity. With their different communities, they get plenty of opportunities to code-switch through their day and bring their two communities closer together. They are the link between them and they hope their experience can lead to mutual understanding and respect.

Here we see evidence of Wenger's boundary trajectory, where the Somali men in this study are participating in both communities and serving as the liaison between both communities. This is an important role as they are the ones who have this privilege to bring their communities together. Their parents are not able to as they lack the English language and their future children will lack the Somali language that these males possess.

Analysis

Preservation of the Somali language. The preservation of the Somali language requires (a) preserving the heritage language and (b) avoiding language loss. By preserving the heritage language, the identity of Somali males is also preserved. When one avoids language loss one protects future generation's identities. From the structured interview, the language log, and the 24-hour interview, I found that the preservation of the Somali language became consistently an important issue to all three participants.

Heritage language. Maintaining one's identity is maintaining one's language. From the structured interview, I asked all three of my participants many questions, see Appendix C. A few of the questions were *what language do you intend or hope to teach your children?*

And *what factors contribute to your measurement of someone being consider a Somali?* All participants answered “Somali” to both questions. Thus, the Somali language is the number one factor for someone being considered a Somali. These young men also see the importance of preserving the Somali language by realizing the following issues: (1) the Somali language is in danger of being lost, and (2) making a conscious decision to teach their children the Somali language, and (3) the Somali language is a must for identifying with and being identified by the Somali race. These findings are in line with prior studies such as Bigelow (2008) who quotes one of the Somali males she interviewed who believes “being Somali means speaking Somali” (p. 28). Here these young men connect language and nationality. Knowing the Somali language makes them insiders. Also knowing the Somali language gives them an understanding of the culture, and tradition. Along with knowing the Somali language, all participants stated that knowing “the culture and tradition” was also a factor in measuring someone being Somali. The tradition of reciting Somali poetry in large gatherings is part of the Somali culture and tradition. The poetry and proverbs play a major role in the Somali culture and tradition. When I asked my participants, *“Is there anything that you can describe in Somali but you are not able to describe it in English”?* All stated yes, and listed the followings: poetry, proverbs, traditions, and culture”.

This is also in accordance with what Bigelow (2008) found; “Oral language in the forms of stories, dramas, jokes, riddles, proverbs, and poems, are centuries old”. Hence language and identity are intertwined, and having knowledge of the language gives an individual the opportunity to become a full member of his community.

As for these Somali college students, they are making a conscious decision to preserve their heritage language. In order for them to be a full member of the Somali community, they must have a full command of the Somali language and pass it down the following generations. The Somali language needs to be preserved. These young men have realized the danger of losing their language and they are taking steps to avoid it. The first step they have taken is to acknowledge that the Somali language is in danger of being lost, and the second practical step they all have taken is to improve their language, and finally to pass the language down to their future children. These steps give hope to the elders of the community, who are monolinguals, and the children, who are born in America, that their heritage language will not be lost.

What I also found was that all three participants made conscious decisions to learn Somali. Additionally, I have noticed that my Somali skills in the four areas of language are not as high as I thought. This has prompted me, personally, to learn Somali, my mother's tongue. Currently, I have been reading the Somali news online in the Somali language. I have been talking to my relatives back in Somalia who only speak via video conference call such as Skype. I have also been talking to the elders in Mosque to improve my fluency in the Somali language.

Language loss. As a consequence of migration and the use of the host language, immigrant communities are losing their language. One of the causes of language loss is immigrant communities adopting the rules and culture of the host country. The Somali diaspora is losing their language with each generation. The findings of this study suggested that all three participants have a stronger command of the English language than the Somali language. All three participants could read, write, speak, and listen to English better than the

Somali language. When I asked, “*Do you think the Somali language is threatened or in danger of being lost*”? All participants stated “yes”. The fact that they believe that their language is already in danger of being lost is alarming but also significant as it gives them the opportunity to look for remedies. What caught my attention, as a Somali male who performs this action subconsciously on a regular basis, as these young men stated: “they chose to speak English to Somali children, even their younger relatives?” When I asked my participants, “*Why they chose to speak English instead of Somali to Somali children*” they all stated, “because they do not speak Somali.” These assumptions are a reality of the crisis of the Somali community losing their heritage language at a higher rate than prior immigrant communities. The Somali community has, essentially, lived in America for just two decades now and their children are not fluent in Somali, nor are their working adults who migrated to America during elementary school and junior high school. What causes the Somali’s to lose their language is what Crawford (1996) states as a shift in values. “If language choices reflect social and cultural values, language shift reflects a change in these values” (Crawford, p. 51). The value of the Somali language is lost in America. There is no incentive to learn Somali. People change their attitude towards the language. These changes in the community diminish the status of the Somali language and put English in a higher status within the community.

What also drives the language loss for Somali’s come from within the Somali community itself. Again, according to Crawford (1996), “Language shift is determined by internal changes within language communities themselves” (p. 53). The internal changes in the Somali Community are as follows:

- Economically active & see economic benefits of learning English,
- Second generation immigrants
- First to go to college
- Role models
- Breadwinners
- Employment, education and commerce opportunities
- Chasing the American dreams
- Hopes of Ivy league schools for their future children

The Somali language becomes lost due to these two groups, mentioned above, in the Somali community; children who are born in America and young men like these three participants who came to America in grade school. The young children are learning the cultural values that are placed in English and the social acceptance in the schoolyard. The participants of this study see English as a means to achieve their main goal in life: economic upward mobility. Therefore, learning English becomes a priority due to this goal for these individuals and social acceptance for the children, which leads to the Somali language usage declining to extinction. I am also optimistic that the Somali language might not be lost with this second generation of Somalis. These three young males showed strong desire to learn the Somali language and preserve it. They all made attempts to improve their language over the summer.

They have noticed a trend in the community which is that the younger generation or the last generation who are born in America do not speak Somali, and they want to change and preserve their language by teaching Somali to their future children.

Somali vs. English. The multilingualism of the Somali males puts them in many situations where they choose between their two languages English and Somali. In these findings, we look at how the language of choice affects their identity. The results will be

discussed in detailed language choice, bilingualism, code-switching, and what language these males will use for jokes, humor, proverbs, and poems.

Language choice: home v public. When looking at language choice for Somali males in America, they are as follows. At home, all three members stated they speak Somali. The reasons are first it is the rule in their homes, out of respect for their mothers and their elders/relatives in the house, second, to get exposure of the language at home, and lastly for gaining membership. Somali is the language of the home, since the home is full with family members and this is in accordance to what Fishman (1965) stated, “In each instance [a person] identifies with a different group to which he belongs, wants to belong, and from which he seeks acceptance” (p. 68). Also, this helps these young men keep close ties with relatives who visit them at home, and by knowing and choosing to speak Somali they will forge relations. This is in line with what, Pearson et al. (2008) states “the social benefits of L1 maintenance also include the potential for adolescents to keep close links to the adults in their lives” (p. 77). Here they made conscious decisions to speak Somali at home for the reasons mentioned above.

The language they prefer to speak out in public appears to be English. The reason for choosing to speak English outside the home are as follows. First, all three participants had full command of the English language. Second, English is the language of employment commerce and education, and third whenever they were in public places English became natural, subconsciously they spoke it. From the language log, the participants went to the following places, clothing stores, grocery stores, and gas stations in all three areas they spoke English. During the 24-hour interviews, I asked why they chose to speak English in these places? All

three participants stated, “It was the only language that they could communicate within those places.” They also mentioned that whenever they see non-Somalis, English comes out naturally as they have full knowledge of the language. Also, all three participants made conscious decisions to speak English with Somali children instead of Somali whenever they saw them outside of the home. From the structured interview when I asked “what topics do you speak in English only”: All three participants stated “Educations, Academics”. The reason why they can speak about these topics in English are the following reasons. First, they have the knowledge of the English language and lack it in Somali. Second English is available to them in these two fields. The only public place that all three participants chose to speak Somali to my surprise was at the “airport” when I asked “If you were at the airport with a family member what language will you speak them?” all three participants stated Somali, due to traveling with family members and them not speaking English. They have shown concerns for their safety but assisting their family took precedence.

The language choice for family, home, culture, tradition, proverbs, and jokes was Somali for Somali males in America while the language choice for academic, employment, and commerce was English. This is due to their multi-identity, multi-lingual selves. Both languages serve a different purpose and help them maintain their ties with both communities that they are living with. Things that are associated with the internal feelings such as culture and traditions are described in Somali, these things are attached with meaning that is deep and dear to their hearts, while economics and education are external material gains which are temporary. We see that the identity of these young males is evolving, and shaping with each community and situation.

Wenger stated previously “the work of identity is always on going” (1998, p. 154). I have also mentioned in the above literature review that in this study that according to postmodernism “identity is no longer viewed as singular and stable, but rather as plural and mutable, and ultimately impossible to grasp through the usual exercise of reason” (Dumitrescu, 2001, p. 12) as opposed to the essentialist perspective. “The essentialist view of identity is grounded in a fixed set of shared characteristics or experience of members of identity group (Moya & Hames-García, 2000, p. 231). The current study found that identity is not fixed as these males use both of their languages and identities to identify with both of their communities on daily basis. Their identity is constantly shifting, developing, and growing with each community. Different topics require to be spoken in different languages, and at different times require them to profess different identities; and therefore, supporting a postmodern understanding of the fluidity of identity.

Bilingualism and code-switching. Bilingualism for Somali males in America is second nature. They switch between both of their languages English and Somali depending on the context of their conversation and with whom they are conversing. Somali males in America usually speak Somali, English and some Arabic. For those who are bilingual, they can use both languages to identify with their two communities. In terms of bilingual communities, there are three different generations as mentioned above. These three males are in the second group which Milroy and Muysken call “the economically active generation” (1995, p. 2). They are active members of both communities as both American and Somali. When they are at their private home and in their Somali community they speak Somali. At school and at work they speak English. In each situation, they stated that they feel

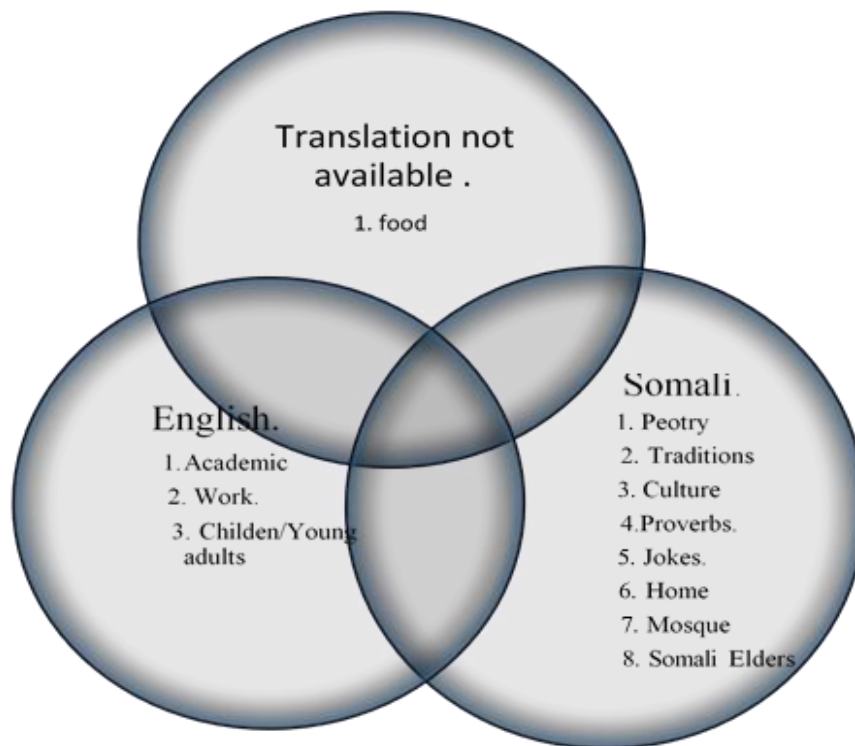
comfortable speaking the appropriate language for that setting in order to affirm their affiliation with that community. This is in line with what Milroy and Muysken (1995) who claim “sometimes two languages rather than one can act as group membership symbols to demonstrate ethnic identity” (p. 24). The participant Farah stated that he is “happy to be bilingual as he can have a different perspective on life than monolingual”. Another benefit to being bilingual for these participants was the connection they wanted to keep with their community. For the reason, all three participants clearly stated that they want to preserve their language by teaching it to their children.

Being bilingual is an asset in this economy and socially accepted today and these young men have embraced being bilingual. This is in contrast to my own personal experience where I was not raised to be bilingual. In fact, during my elementary days, I actually rejected bilingualism. When I was in elementary school in mid-90’s, there were not many Somali’s living in Southern California, which made it hard for me to embrace, much less practice being bilingual. All three participants had opportunities to embrace their identity as Somali due to their locality in Minnesota, which we call Little Mogadishu. Having a large Somali population in Minnesota gave these young men opportunities that were not available to others, including me.

Being bilingual many Somali males use their knowledge of language to code-switch in certain situations. Code-Switching is defined by Milroy and Muysken as (1995) “the use of two or more languages by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversations” (p. 7). In this study, the participants stated that they code-switch for only one reason: which is

code-switching was natural for them and they would innately switch between English and Somali.

Code-switching occurred in different situations throughout their daily lives with people of different generations, settings and topics (see Appendix D). Here are also some of the reasons why they code-switch during their conversation. First, they knew words in Somali but did not know them in English and vice versa, and some words could not be translated either because there is not an equivalent in the both languages (see Appendix E). Second, some situations require them to speak English, Somali or both. Lastly, they are part of the American and Somali communities.



This diagram demonstrates the over-lap of using Somali and English throughout the day. As indicated in the literature review, code-switching serves several functions, one of which is to demonstrate membership in communities. My study supports these claims. Somali male's code-switch between English and Somali to show they belong to both communities in different contexts and situations. This code-switching is determined by the age, location, and topic of the other party they are conversing with. For example, when Somali males are in the Somali community they speak and describe Somali jokes, proverbs, and poetry in Somali. When I asked all of my participants why they can only describe these acts in Somali they stated that if poetry, jokes, and proverbs were translated from Somali into English they would lose their true meaning. On this notion of describing jokes, proverbs, and poetry in Somali Abdirahman stated it the best by saying "they have cultural connotations to them" which means that can only be understood in the Somali language by Somali people only. Farah added, "phrases/expressions are hard to interpret in English and won't make sense if you translate it".

For these reasons, they code-switch to Somali when describing the above acts giving them membership to the Somali community. This indicates to us that knowing the language is not enough. One must also be familiar with the cultures in order to understand and describe these acts in Somali. This is in line with Dewaele and Li (2014) who state "identity and identification- code-switching can be strategically employed when the speaker wishes to show involvement, group membership, expertise, power, and also excluding someone who does not know the language" (p. 227). Here they want to affirm their Somali identity by showing their knowledge of the culture and linguistic skills to describe these cultural values such as poetry,

proverbs, and jokes in Somali. They also want to be seen as an insider in the Somali community, not to be confused with those who lost their identity and language. Also, these acts are passed down in oral language, nothing is written as the Somali language is an oral language. This also confirms what Bigelow (2010b) found that the Somali language is an “oral language in the forms of stories, dramas, jokes, riddles, proverbs, and poems, are centuries old” (p. 35). This requires one to describe them in Somali only. Having the ability to describe these cultural values shows that these Somali males have pride in being Somali and a strong sense of belonging to the Somali community even though they have left Somalia as children. These situations require them to showcase their Somali skills in order to affirm their identity. By code-switching, they are showing that they have one foot in each of the communities that they belong to.

Certain situations cause individuals to code-switch between their native language and the host country’s language. With the Somali males in America, they are in these situations throughout their day that requires them to speak Somali and English. For example, when they are in the Somali community they are expected to speak Somali and when they are with their American community they are expected to speak English. These males speak Somali to their elders and English with their colleagues and co-workers. Those are the languages that are available to them and the other participants in their conversations. Situations in restaurants and school cafeterias are where there were a lot of code-switching. In these situations, all three males practiced what Milroy and Muysken (1995) stated: “intra-sentential and inter-sentential” code-switching, “inter-sentential is used for switches within the sentences, and inter-sentential used for switches between sentences” (p. 8). When Abdirahman was with his

friends at a restaurant, he was speaking Somali, but when it came to ordering his food, he ordered it in English. He used English to describe Teriyaki chicken with mashed potatoes, gravy and with cold slaw. He used English as these foods were not part of the Somali food and their names were not available in Somali. Farah was speaking with his family planning a trip overseas. He was code-switching as he did not know the jargon for traveling to and the process of it in Somali. Likewise, Abdulahi was discussing current NBA players with his friend and he used both languages to convince his friend who the best player in the NBA was.

Interviewer: You and your friend chose to discuss NBA player in Somali and English can you explain to me why you guys chose to use both languages.

Abdulahi: Anagu markan hadleyno kama fakarno luuqadda an kuhadleyno, labada luuqadood ingiriis iyo soomali wan isticmalnaa laakin badanka waxan isticmaal naa af ingiriiska.

Interviewer: But tell why in this discussion you use both languages?

Abdulahi: Waxaan kahadleyney NBA da siday rigged, fixed utahay. Hal marban isaragnay ana goo kahadleyna si da NBA da ay u caawiso ciyaartoyga oogufiican sida Lebron jamaes,

Interviewer: How so can you tell me specific words you use in English and Somali?

Abdulahi: Add iyo add bay NBA oogu wacdaa fowal mar kastoo lataabto, ciyaartoyga kale intaas oo fowal ah maheleen may kay ciyaarayaan, laakin isaga kaliya baa hela. Eradaya an kudaho af ingiris waxaa kamid ah; crying about calls, whining, flopping,

Interviewer: But why did you choose these words in English?

Abdulahi: Wey fudhatahay inaan ereyadaan ku sheego af ingiris, kuma garanayo af soomali. Horta ma hay Sanaa kalimaadkan oo ah af soomali?

Interviewer: am not sure.

Abdulahi: ok

These types of situations might cause them to code-switch between sentences and within the sentences. Code-switching between Somali and English to these males came naturally to them. All participants stated that they subconsciously switched between languages without noticing it or missing a beat. Innately they used both languages within sentences and between sentences. Here we can use Abdulahi use these words flopping,

whining and crying about calls in basketball in English. He learned all of these words in English. If these words were translated to Somali, perhaps they might have lost their true meaning and hinder the flow of the conversation.

In general, Somali males, in America, code-switch because they do not know words or phrases in one language or the other language. For example, when it comes to Somali food they can only describe it in Somali. They will begin to describe how great Somali food is in English and then state the name of the food in Somali like Bur, *Suqaar*, *Samboos*, and *Malawax*. This is in line with one type of code-switching that Milroy and Muysken (1995) describe: “the intra-sentential switch between the sentences” (p. 8). In other words, switches between sentences. The Somali men in this study are not able to describe Somali foods in English. The names of these foods are not available in English. Perhaps these types of food are not part of American food. Therefore, words that can be substituted are not available in English. Additionally, they code-switch when it comes to describing ins and outs of a startup business. Here we see the code-switching. Abdullahi’s friend was describing the ins and outs of a startup business in Somali, but used English to describe key words. Here is a transcript of the 24-hour interview from Abdullahi.

Interviewer: When you and your friend were discussing business, you guys used English and Somali. Can you explain to why you guys used both languages?

Abdullahi: Waxaan ku bilaabno sheeko af soomali waxan ku damaynaa af ingiriisi..

Interviewer: How so? Can you elaborate a little more on that?

Abdullahi: Hada anagoo kahadleya business kilaamadka qaar koot af soomali kumagaranayno, waxaa ka mid ah; principal, payment, interest, star-ups, and small business, waxaan ooday luuqad kale bay ilayihiin oh af soomali ila ma ahan

Interviewer: Why would he use English to describe these words?

Abdullahi: Aniga iyo saxiibkay kuma garanayno kalimaadkan af soomali

Interviewer: I see. Is there any other reason he might describe these words in English only?

Abdulahi: Ma hubi laakin badanka waxan kuhadalnaa af ingiriis.

Interviewer. Thank you.

Here we see the code-switching from the above transcript. Code-switching between sentences with the majority of the explanation done in English. Key terms and ideas after sentences were described in English. I can only speculate that these words were learned in English. Additionally, academic words were only known in English. These words are available in Somali, but all three participants lack the Somali linguistic skills to describe these concepts in Somali. All three of these young men were educated in America as they left Somalia during the civil war in the early '90s.

They never had an opportunity to be educated in Somali and this limits their vocabulary. These young men code-switch, between Somali and English, because they are part of both communities. They are trying to maintain their Somali identity while at the same time chasing the American dream. Having multiple identities can be challenging in these difficult times, but it can open many more opportunities if one pursues them. Currently, code-switching and bilingualism are embraced and encouraged due to the linguistic benefits and the countless scholarly research that proves it. I can only provide one great scholar on this issue of benefits of bilingualism due to space and that is Bialystok (2009) who found in her research that “early studies showed that bilingual children performed better than monolingual children on metalinguistic tasks” (p. 5). She also found that “The research with children has shown that bilingual children develop the ability to solve problems that contain conflicting or misleading cues at an earlier age than monolinguals” (p. 5). Likewise, Milroy and Muysken (1995) state “Language alteration is conceptualized not as a deficit to be stigmatized, but as an additional resource through which a range of social and rhetorical meaning are expressed”

(p. 9). Thus code-switching is evidence for the creativity and benefits of being bilingual. It is incumbent upon ESL teachers to understand code-switching “as an additional resource through which a range of social and rhetorical meanings are expressed” (p. 9) in order to facilitate opportunities for their students to practice both of their languages in the classroom in order to enhance their understanding of the lesson.

Cultural, tradition, and language in preserving the identity of Somali males in America.

Communities of practice. Somali males in America live between their Somali community and their American community. With each community, they have a different membership. Wenger (1998) previously described the several layers of trajectories of community membership which influences our identity. The trajectories of their membership in these communities vary within the spectrum of the daily context of the trajectories. Throughout their day they are in different environments within their communities. The trajectories depend on their own view and the view of the communities they want to enter. Both communities have gatekeepers who are the insiders, who have influence in their communities. In the Somali community, it is the elders who are consider native speakers of the Somali language and in the American community, it is the Caucasian males. These young men do not fit into either community.

What I found in this study is that all three participants feel a part of the American and the Somali communities. They performed acts that prove that they belong to both communities. In the Somali community they believe that they are insiders. This is due to their understanding, appreciation, participation, and efforts to preserve their culture, tradition, and

language. During the structured interview, I asked my participants, “what language do you intend or hope to teach your children”? All stated “Somali”. The second question was, “do you think the Somali language is threatened or in danger of being lost”? All three participants stated “yes”. The third question I asked my participants was, “what factor contributes to your measurement of someone being consider a Somali”? All three participants stated the “the Somali language”. The fourth question I asked was, “is there anything that you can describe in Somali but you are not able to describe in English”? All participants stated yes, and they provided the following items: proverbs, jokes, traditions, and culture. The fifth question I asked my participants was, “what topics do you speak in Somali only”? The respondents replied with the following items: poetry, proverbs, traditions, and culture. The last question I asked my participants was “describe places where you feel safe speaking Somali”? They felt comfortable speaking Somali at home and Mosque. All of these answers affirm their beliefs as insiders in their community. Their identity is evolving through their behaviors and responses such as speaking Somali to their parents, feeling safe to speak Somali at home and Mosque only. Their description of their culture and oral traditions indicate their deep connection with the Somali language. These phenomena have deeper implications than just language. They are emotional experiences that can only be felt by an insider in the Somali community. Describing these topics gives a sense of belonging that cannot be taken away. The following transcript reflects that emotional belonging.

Transcript #1 Abdulahi.

Interviewer: What language do you intend or hope to teach your children?

Abdulahi: Somali

Interviewer: Why?

Abdulahi: I want to teach them because hopefully that is going to be their language, to keep the tradition, culture and a sense of belonging, because he has to have an identity.

Interviewer: So what do you mean you have to have an identity?

Abdulahi: Oh you want to pass on, I don't want them to lose their heritage, I speak Somali, my dad spoke Somali, so his dad spoke Somali it's important to know your native language, if you know that you have a sense of, like an identity, you are not gonna be oh I only speak English but I don't know my native language, there are some Hispanics that say I wish I could speak Spanish, and when you ask why? They say I want to talk to my grandparents, I want to belong, and so that's one thing

Interviewer: But you said that your identity, they have to speak Somali because their identity, what do you mean by that?

Abdulahi: Somali people first of all, if you don't speak Somali they probably won't consider you to be Somali, and it's hard if you are a child and grow up a place where there is a lot of Somali people and you don't speak Somali, then they will say 'reer mareykan' stuff like that, you want your kid to fit in.

Interviewer: So you are telling me that by knowing the Somali language a person is gonna belong to the Somali community?

Abdulahi: Yes, you will be part of that community, they are not gonna take you lightly, you gonna be involve more

Interviewer: So speaking Somali makes you Somali?

Abdulahi: Yes, it does and a lot of other things Interviewer: Such as food, oh religion, food, and some habits we do.

Interviewer: Such as

Abdulahi: Certain characteristics we do, I don't know how to explain it, but, the Somali if the Somali language is the number one thing makes you feel Somali, people actually make fun of you if you don't speak Somali that well, they say "Somali mabatihid"

Interviewer: And that's the number one thing that makes you Somali

Abdulahi: Yes, that's how you relate to people, because you speak the same language, you are from the same place, regardless where they from Somali people say we are Somali.

Transcript # 2 Farah.

Interviewer: What language do you intend or hope to teach your children?

Farah: Somali

Interviewer: Why

Farah: I would like to teach them Somali first and the reason is for that is if I have kids here in America either way they gonna learn English, but if they don't learn, kid learn better at a younger age than they do when they grow up, so if I teach them Somali at a young age it's less likely for them to forget it, they can learn English at any point, they can't learn Somali at any point it will be difficult. The Somali language is part of their culture, and heritage.

Interviewer: Ok

Transcript #3 Abdirahman.

Interviewer: What language do intend or hope to teach to your children?

Abdirahman: Somali

Interviewer: Why

Abdirahman: I didn't become fluent the way I would have liked to and I feel like being connected to your culture is important and learning the language of your people are important I think my future kids will be able to speak English innately and subconsciously being in their environment, you know being born in America but they won't have the same chance to learn Somali like I had, so I like to teach them Somali language as much as I like.

Interviewer: Ok.

From the above transcript, we see the importance all participants place on the Somali language. The Somali language is a requirement for them to be a member of the Somali community here in America. Here they are trying to traverse the path of their forefathers by hoping to teach the Somali language to their future children in order for them be an insider in the Somali community and permanently remain. This is in line with what Li (2007) found: "Through language we express our identity". She also states "people identify themselves and are identified through the language they use in expressing their cultural background, their affiliations, their attitudes and values" (p. 262). All of them mentioned the Somali language as the key identifier to being Somali, expressing culture, being connected to the Somali community. This requires knowledge of the Somali language. The findings also confirm what Pearson et al. (2008) state "the social benefits of L1 maintenance also include the potential for adolescents to keep close links to the adults in their lives" (p. 77). By knowing and hoping to teach their future children the Somali language their future children will be able to speak with their grandparents. When these males and their future children go to Somali cultural events such as weddings, holiday celebrations, or tribal meetings they will not feel like an outcast. Instead they will have that connection due to their Somali language proficiency. What also

makes these Somali males feel like an insider in the Somali community is their efforts to improve their knowledge about the Somali language.

The participants in this study all indicated their desire to master the Somali language. Abdulahi made it a goal for the summer to improve his Somali by speaking to his mother more often and learning Somali poetry. He connected language to identity and being an insider by speaking it. Abdirahman made it a goal to speak Somali to his friend and improve as he deems it important for his future career as an Imam. Lastly Farah said he wants to learn Somali to have a better understanding of his culture. He is speaking more often with the Somali elders in his community. All of these acts are performed to further their identity and permanently secure their place in the Somali community. Just by participating in this study they have come to the realization that their native language is not as strong as they would like. Now they are planning to be more proactive in learning it, preserving it and teaching it to their future children.

What also makes all three participants feel like an insider in the Somali community is that all three participants have stated that events around family life were spoken in English. The Somali language became a means for bonding with family and community. When I asked *what topics do you only speak in Somali?* Abdirahman states “When a conversation about Somalia happens, when getting to know each other’s family and tribes, speaking only Somali makes sense, when speaking about the Somali history, because there are so many events that happened in Somali that are described in proverbs.” Farah states “things like Somali politics”, it’s concerning Somali” and Abdulahi states, “Somali stuff like culture, talking to elders”. Here we see that the membership to the community can be accessed through the language.

This language defines one's place in the community. Additionally, the tribal part of the culture has had an influence on the Somali parents here in America. The Somali culture revolves around the tribe. Politics and tribes are intertwined in Somali. For these parents, their aid and assistance of other

Somali's usually is based on their tribes. If an individual that is seeking assistance from them is a member of their tribe, most likely, they will help. If he is not, then they might not help him. The young generation of the Somali community does not feel that attachment to the tribes like their parents. Their attachment is based on friendship. Furthermore, having the linguistic skills to describe real-life events that happen in Somali with proverbs, and being able to describe family lineage can only make one an insider in the Somali community. In the community, tribes are sacred because, one must know his genealogy in order to maintain political leverage, social acceptance, and economic opportunities. This is in line with what Samatar (1992) found when he states "Genealogy therefore constitutes the heart of the Somali social system" (p. 628). If one does not know his tribe nor ascribe to it he will be an outcast. The tribal part of the culture was not left behind in Somalia but it was brought to America. Here the membership to the community can be accessed through the language. This language defines one's place in the community. Then what about the one that describes his tribe in English? The answer is what Abdulahi mentioned earlier when he said the Somali community will refer you as "*reer mareykan*" which means an American, or "*Soomali matihid*" which means you are not Somali. It is not enough to ascribe to the culture and language, but one must speak it in order to fully be accepted as a Somali. Knowing key parts of the Somali community such, as tribes, culture, history, and using Somali language is a must for one to be

considered an insider. As for their belonging to the American community it varies within the trajectories. Inside the classroom and workplace these young men feel an insider, since they know the ins and outs of the workplace and inside the classroom. When I asked them, *what topics can you speak in English only?* They all stated “education and work”. Abdiraham stated “most of my interaction is in English, English comes to me naturally”, Farah stated, “it’s easier to explain in English, more comfortable in English”, and Abdullahi stated, “English for academic”. From their statements, we can see the comfort level they have in speaking English

They feel comfortable, and thus it can be said that they feel like insiders. They might also feel as an insider in the American culture due to their knowledge of the subjects and having a strong command of the English language. But their colleagues and co-workers might notice the difference in their speech and remind them that they are not as Americans as they think. As we have previously asked, *is there anything that you can describe in English but you are not able to describe in Somali?* Again all participants mentioned different aspects of “education, work, and government”. Abdulahi said he can describe engineering theories, medical terminologies, constitutions, laws, and literature in English only.” Farah states “Academic terminology, English is the language of the workplace”. And Abdirahman states, “Medical terminology, ‘school, work, and careers.’” The participants are able to describe academics and schools in English as they learned them in English. These young men came to America as children in elementary school. They have experienced school and work in English. In these two areas, they have a sense of belonging due to their experience and

language skills. Their level comfort level. Their feelings of acceptance in these two places can only come from those who consider themselves as part of this American community.

In other times, they feel in the peripheral trajectories. They come to the realization of not being a member of the American community. The evidence for this marginalization is when I asked my participants, if you were at the airport with a family member what language will you speak with them? And why? Two-third of them participants stated English. Farah said, “I will speak English, some fear that if you don’t speak English people might be suspicious of them”.

Abdirahman said, “I fear for my safety”. Speaking the Somali language at the airport highlights their difference from the rest of the people at the airport which might lead to lives being in jeopardy. Law enforcement in the airport might detain them for questioning, or worse interrogate them long enough to make them miss their flight. I can relate to these two men’s experience, I, as a Somali male, speak English at the airport for a fear of my safety. Their safety is put in danger due to them speaking Somali instead of English at the airports. Situations like this make Somali males feel like outsiders in the American community and affirm their differences from the rest of the society.

We all want to be a member of a community. This community gives us the acceptance we direly need as humans to survive. We might ascribe to this community based on gender, race, religion, and or language. Having multiple communities can also be challenging. Balancing both communities can be a complex task likewise. This task of balancing their identity for both communities they belong to is what Somali males in America face every day. Belonging to what community on a daily basis is a battle they fight every day. All of my

participants are first-generation Somali immigrants who grew up between two worlds. The American world they currently reside in, and the Somali world they were born in. They are not fully embraced in either community. They are too foreign for many Americans and too American for their communities.

Motivation to Learn Somali and English in America

The motivation to learn one's native language or the host country language has many benefits for those who strive for it. For the Somali males in America, their motivation to learn English is for the purposes of communicating with the host country since English is the primary language, and the Somali language is their mother tongue. For those reasons, they have the motivation to learn both languages. Motivation plays a major role in learning a language. There is a well-established belief among researchers that motivation is a powerful engine that leads to success in learning a second, foreign language or a native language. The theory of motivation according to Gardner and Lambert (1972) is "instrumental and integrative" (p, 3). They provide the framework for motivation but for the Somali males in this study their motivation to learn Somali and English were both integrated and instrumental. Therefore motivation evolves like their identity.

Instrumental motivation. When looking at motivation we must first understand the two elements that make up the theory of motivation. The first element of motivation is instrumental motivation which is when "the purposes of language study reflect more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement, such as getting ahead in one's occupation" (Gardner & Lambert p, 3). Instrumental motivation is learning a language for practical reasons such as passing a foreign language class in high school in order to graduate, getting a

monetary reward such as an increase in pay, or meeting the requirement of fulfilling an application for a graduate school. For example the instrumental motivation to learn English for the Somali males in America are as follows; first it is necessity since English is the language of their current country, second to get a job, third to go to school and lastly to communicate their needs.

Integrative motivation. The second element of motivation is integrative motivation which states the “students wishes to learn more about the other cultural community because he is interested in it in an open-minded way, to the point of eventually being accepted as a member of that other group (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 3). For integrative motivation for language study, people want to know a language in order to connect with the people or the culture. They want to be an insider of this community in which they seek to be a full member. Language is more than a course, it is a desire and admiration for those who speak the language. Making effort to be part of this community and connect with the culture and tradition. For the Somali males in this community the integrative motivation to learn Somali is as follows; to have a better understanding of their culture, tradition and be part of the community. Somali language is their heritage and integral part of the community. This theory of motivation explains the identity of Somali as males as this theory is continuum just like their identity. The different aspects of this theory cover the different aspects of Somali male’s identity.

These three young men have shown great concern and motivation for learning English and Somali. Their motivation to learn English and Somali was different for each language but the goal was the same, which is to be part of each community of which they are members.

Just like identity, motivation is dynamic in that it evolves and changes. Motivation is a continuum and constantly shifting with these three participants. Their motivation to learn Somali and English is not static, but a continuum, and shifting back and forth like a pendulum. All three of them stated their motivation was solely driven by economic gains, and advancement in a career, since English is the language of the school and workplace. When I asked “what topics can you speak in English only?” All three participants stated academics. The motivation for learning English is instrumental only. During the 24-hour interview, they all reported speaking English whenever their conversations turned to sports, academics, work, and activities outside the homes. They spoke English out of necessity. Places outside the home where they spoke English were malls, gas stations, schools, and work. English became a means of communicating with the society in which they live. Perhaps they were only able to speak about these topics in English because they had the knowledge of it in English only. Also, all three participants stated they had full command of the English language, but not Somali. Although one might not fully be able to grasp a full command of the English language, what these participants are stating is that they have studied academic English at a college level. I also feel that I have more command of the English language than Somali. These young men are what Milroy and Muysken in 1995 call “the economically active generation” (p. 2). To further explain they are the breadwinners in their communities, main interpreters and the bridge between the elders in their community who are monolingual in the Somali language and the children who are born in the United States of America who are virtually monolingual in the English language (Milroy & Muysken, 1995, p. 2).

English becomes a necessity for their survival. I had the same motivation to learn English. I can recall when I was learning English in elementary school and our teacher would ask us, what do you want be when you grow up? We, would name our future careers and goals such as medicine, and law. We as immigrant students, quickly realized that English was the language of higher education. Also, it became clear to us that English was the key to learning anything in America. For that same reason these young men have realized that learning English and attaining higher education will put them in an elite class within the Somali community. This is what they strive for and what motivates them to learn the English Language. Additionally, learning English becomes a priority due to economic upward mobility and the social acceptance in public places.

Their motivation to learn Somali was integrative motivation. They wanted to learn Somali to be part of the Somali community. They understood that speaking Somali was the key to them being an insider. Their motivation to learn Somali had deep history, and future goals. They see themselves in the boundary trajectory between their elders who are monolingual in the Somali language and the younger generation of Somali children who are born in America.

Abdullah, one of the participants, stated that he made it a goal for the summer to improve his knowledge of the Somali language by speaking to his mother and also learning some Somali poetry. He connected language to identity and being an insider by speaking it. Abdirahman made it a goal to speak Somali to his friend and improve as he deemed it be important for his future occupation as an Imam. Lastly, Farah said he wants to learn Somali in order to have a better understanding of his culture. He is speaking more often with the elders

in his community on a weekly basis. Recall earlier that I asked all three participants “*what language do you intend or hope to teach your children*” All three participants stated the Somali Language. Here again we see the desire to be part of the Somali community in learning and preserving the Somali language by hoping to teach it to their children. They hope to give their future children an opportunity that they did not have. They left Somalia at an early age. Currently the University of Minnesota and Ohio State University teach the Somali language and this will give them opportunity to learn the language. Their motivation to learn Somali is for future plans as stated above and being connected to their community and culture. The language becomes the key to interring and remaining this community. When I asked “*do you think the Somali language is threatening or in danger of being lost*” all three participants said yes. This indicates that these young men have concerns about their language being lost, within the next generation and this is what is motivating them to learn the Somali language in order to preserve it and pass it down. Learning Somali is learning their identity which might help them preserve it. Likewise, all three participants speak Somali with their mothers, and relatives. Somali is the language that is spoken in their homes. They speak Somali to their family members in order to relate to them. Additionally, it is the norm in their community to speak Somali whenever you encounter your elders or have a guest in your home.

The motivation behind learning Somali is hoping to become an insider in the Somali community here in America and back home whenever they return to it. Future goals such as teaching the Somali language to their children and the fear of losing their heritage language are the forces behind their motivation. Thus, these males carry multi-identity which requires

them to be well versed in their multi-languages. Both of these languages contribute to their identity and help them maintain their ties with both of their communities. Balancing both languages and keeping one foot in each community requires one to master both languages. This is what motivates them to learn English and Somali. Investment in a language is an investment in identity. Learning a language is an investment in one's identity. Norton and Gao (2008) state "an investment in the target language is in fact an investment in the learner's identity" (p, 110). As for this study, we have seen how these investments in learning the target languages English and Somali have affected the identities of Somali males growing in America. The investment in learning English and Somali had direct effect on their identity building, and the return of this investment will be seen in the following areas, monetary gains for being fluent in both languages, future plans, and bettering one's self.

Future plans. The investment these participants made in learning Somali for their future plans were as followed. First, they all wanted to teach their children Somali, secondly, they wanted to return to Somali and be a full member of their community, and lastly they deemed that the Somali language is their litmus test in judging who Somali is and who is not Somali. As for their investment in learning English for their future plans, are as follows, first the English language will give them upward mobility in economic and secondly a social status in America. English is the language of the host community, the language of the academy and workplace. All of them stated that they had "stronger command of the English language than the Somali language. And this gives them an opportunity to chase the American dream in their future. They can graduate from universities, buy homes and give their children better futures than they could have if they only used Somali. Investing in English will put them in

the elite class, as it will give them many opportunities back home and here in America. There are limited opportunities for those who do not have full command of the English language in America and in Somalia. Opportunities for employment, education and business decreases with each generation when they do not speak the English language. When I was learning English in elementary school, one thing that motivated me was the idea of becoming a doctor. It became clear that English was the key to learning medicine in the United States. Therefore, I prioritized English in order to secure my future while neglecting my heritage language. For this reason Somali males, in general, invest in learning English for their future in America. Investing time in learning English and Somali has the potential to brighten their future as Somali males in America and in Somalia.

Monetary gains. The monetary gains from the investment in learning English and Somali can be divided into two segments. The monetary gains for being fluent in English and Somali in America and in Somalia. Currently in the state of Minnesota, there are 17,320 Somali residents in Minnesota (Gambino et al., 2014, p. 2). In St. Cloud there are about “1,556 Somalis that reside in the city as of today” (Banian & García-Perez, 2014, p. 2) while the population of St. Cloud city is 66,292 as of 2014. (City of St Cloud Demographic, 2014). With this large population comes numerous employment opportunities for those who are bilingual in both languages. Employment opportunities include interpreting, cultural liaison with the schools, advocate for social service, and community leaders. From this research, the participants made it clear that English, not Somali, is the language that will secure them employment and education. The Somali immigrant community is experiencing the same obstacles that prior communities have experienced with their language. English is

attached with economics gains as it is the language of the workforce and the education field.

At the same time, the Somali language has significant monetary gains in America and Somali but not to the level of the English language.

Bettering one's self. Lastly investment in language can be an investment in one's self, by bettering one's self through the language he or she learns. As for the Somali males learning the Somali language is one way that they are bettering themselves. By learning Somali, they will turn their imagined communities that they aspire to be with into a reality community here in America. Having the Somali language paves the way to being an insider in the Somali community and with their own family. One of the things that stands out from these young men is that they are caught between two communities, which gives them multiple identities. Learning Somali and English becomes a necessity for both of their communities. In terms of bettering themselves the Somali language had more impact on their self-worth than English. Things that had meaning to them in their life were described in Somali such as jokes, proverbs, tradition and cultures. These things describe the inner feelings, where the true identity of an individual lies. This identity comes to the forefront in the locations and the individuals with whom the young men felt comfortable speaking the Somali language. Places such as the home and Mosque were most likely to involve the Somali language and with the elders of their community as well. Likewise, when I asked "*describe places where you feel safe speaking Somali*"? The following areas were mentioned: home and Mosque. Somali was also the language they all spoke at home and with their elders. These findings validate the claims that language is intertwined with identity. Language learning engages the identity and it becomes a way of one bettering himself. Li in 2007 had previously explained further this

notion of language and identity “Through language we express our identity”. People identify themselves and are identified through the language they use in expressing their cultural background, their affiliations, their attitudes and values” (p. 262). In order for them to recognize they had to learn Somali. All three participants understand that the Somali language, is what, in large part, gives them a sense of identity and belonging Somali males express their culture through the language they use. This also shows their affiliations, attitudes, and values through their language usage. All three of them mentioned they hoped to go back to Somalia one day and they wanted to fit in right away, not to feel an outsider. This also motivated them to learn the Somali language. Bettering one’s self is maintaining and preserving their heritage language. Language becomes the criteria to be a member of a community and this is why they invest in learning Somali as it also becomes investment in themselves.

Learning a language is more than the scientific system of words it engages the individual and this alone is a motivation for learners, Norton and Toohey (2002) mentioned “Language learning engages the identities of learners because language itself is not only a simple a linguistic system of signs and symbols; it is also a complex social practice in which the value of and meaning ascribed to the person who speaks” (p. 115).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have learned that the identity of Somali males in America is constantly evolving due to their multiple identities and being multilingual in America. Their identity is constantly evolving as they go in and out through the different trajectories. They carry many traits that affirm/deny their multi-identities. That which affirms their identity as

Somali males is their ability to have that connection with the Somali community. This connection comes from their desire to identify with and belief to be a full member. As members, they have noticed trends within themselves and the community at large which is that their language is dying. Upon noticing this epidemic at its early stage, they have decided individually to take initiatives to preserve their language. First, they have noticed that their Somali is not on par with their English. Secondly, they have decided to improve it, and thirdly, they want to teach it to their future children. Even though they feel like full members of the Somali community, the shakers and the movers of the Somali community might not see these young men to be full members.

One of the traits that might deny their full membership is that their language skills, according to the elders in the community, is not proficient. But these young men have pride, honor, and dignity in preserving their language and deep-rooted reasons to be accepted as a full member. Additionally, their identity has a part that is an internal strife going on, on a daily basis as to who I am. It becomes a battle to enter the American community. All three participants have lived in America since elementary school. They have graduated from high schools, and are currently enrolled in four-year colleges in the Midwest. They play basketball instead of soccer. They have a better command of the English language than the Somali language. They consider America to be their permanent home. They are more in tune with the American life-style than that of Somalian. Even though they have all of these characteristics with America yet they are not embraced as full members of American society. What denies them the right to be a full member is their language, religion, economic standing, and race. This rejection gives hope to these young men to identifying with the Somali community back

in Somalia. This imagined community is in accordance with what Kanno and Norton (2003) state “immediately, tangible, and accessible” (p. 241). The rejection from the American community highlights their differences, but in Somalia their beliefs, language, and race are that of everyone. Abdulahi, states “the culture in the U.S if you are a Muslim, your religion is part of your culture and some of the stuff we do is kind of alienating like praying, fasting and back home people share the same culture in terms of religion, and you will not feel like an outsider as you feel here” What Abdulahi is feeling can be applied to all Somali’s living in North American. This feeling of being an outcast is due to their religion, language and race. This struggle he is describing is something that prior immigrants faced. The Chinese immigrant workers in America faced similar discriminations. They were banned from entering the country and denied citizenship to those that were already in the country working as laborers. Here is an example of a major law that congress passed to bar Chinese immigrants from entering the United States, “Congress passed the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, barring the entry into United States of all Chinese laborers” (Calavita, 2000, p. 1). What the Somali community is experiencing in discriminations is similar to what prior immigrant communities have experienced. These communities have overcome to a certain extent the outwardly racism and with time the Somali community will overcome too.

According to Wenger a “boundary trajectory” (1998, pp. 154-155) is living between two communities and maintaining membership in these communities and in turn linking communities, that are different in so many ways. These two communities become barriers for Somali males living in America. These barriers are challenges they face but they do not deter

them from achieving their goals in life. Having a foot in each community and not fully being embraced is a constant challenge.

I can attest to these challenges as a Somali male in America. My story is quite the same as these three participants. I struggle to fit into both communities as I carry the same traits that these young men carry such as: different religion, language, and race than that of the predominant Anglo-Saxons Judeo-Christian Americans. But we do not struggle with other minorities communities such as the African-American, Hispanics Native Americans. Not being a full social member of the American society can be understood, but what I could not understand is how we are not considered to be full social members of the Somali community. I can recall an instance when my roommate and I were at the Mosque. Upon finishing, our prayer, we were speaking English. A Somali elder came to us and asked us “where did you leave the Somali language.” Here in our own Mosque we thought we were insiders. However, the insider thought otherwise. We did not expect an elder, with whom we felt a special bond with to consider us as “others”. His statement might have some validity as I have noticed that I use English more often than Somali. During a recent road trip, my Somali friends and I used English the majority of the time. In this car that was full of only Somali males we chose English as the primary language of our communications. We chose English as Abdirahman stated earlier “it comes natural to speak English.” Likewise, it comes natural for me to speak English. This might be the reason why the Somali community might see us as Americans. Even though we might have more American inside of us than Somali, America still sees us as Somali immigrants. In many respects, we are disqualified from both communities, left with

mixed identities, feelings, and emotions that will require an endless search for our true identity.

Limitations

The limitation of this study was the process of selecting participants. The pre-selection questions narrowed down to three participants that were similar in their language skills and background. Their language skills in terms of the Somali language were identical in that they could only understand the language but were not able to read and write at the same level as they could read and write English. Due to their language skills and other similar demographics, i.e., all male, all college graduates, similar age, and all second generation Somali immigrants, the results of the study may have been skewed. Future researchers can add participants who are very fluent in the Somali language, somewhat fluent or those who do not comprehend it. Perhaps they also can include participants of different age, gender, and generation. This might give us a comprehensive look at the Somali identity in America.

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Appendix A: Survey

1. Educational Background:
 - a. High School diploma
 - b. Associate degree
 - c. Some four year college credits
 - d. Bachelor degree
 - e. Graduate degree
 - f. N/A
2. How long have you lived in America? _____
3. How would you rate your reading skills in the Somali language, in the following items?
 - a. Newspaper
 1. Least proficient
 2. Somewhat proficient
 3. Neutral
 4. Proficient
 5. Fully proficient
 6. N/A
 - b. Novels
 1. Least proficient
 2. Somewhat proficient
 3. Neutral
 4. Proficient
 5. Fully proficient
 6. N/A
 - c. Textbooks
 1. Least proficient
 2. Somewhat proficient
 3. Neutral
 4. Proficient
 5. Fully proficient
 6. N/A
 - d. Holy Quran
 1. Least proficient
 2. Somewhat proficient
 3. Neutral
 4. Proficient
 5. Fully proficient
 6. N/A

4. How would you rate your listening skills of the Somali language in the following items?

a. Music

1. Least proficient
2. Somewhat proficient
3. Neutral
4. Proficient
5. Fully Proficient
6. N/A

b. News

1. Least proficient
2. Somewhat proficient
3. Neutral
4. Proficient
5. Fully proficient
6. N/A

c. Sermons

1. Least proficient
2. Somewhat proficient
3. Neutral
4. Proficient
5. Fully proficient
6. N/A

d. Documentaries

1. Least proficient
2. Somewhat proficient
3. Neutral
4. Proficient
5. Fully proficient
6. N/A

5. How would you rate your Somali speaking comprehension?

a. Family

1. Least proficient
2. Somewhat proficient
3. Neutral
4. Proficient
5. Fully proficient
6. N/A

b. Friends

1. Least proficient
2. Somewhat proficient
3. Neutral
4. Proficient
5. Fully proficient
6. N/A

- c. Social conversations
 - 1. Least proficient
 - 2. Somewhat proficient
 - 3. Neutral
 - 4. Proficient
 - 5. Fully proficient
 - 6. N/A
 - d. Academic
 - 1. Least proficient
 - 2. Somewhat proficient
 - 3. Neutral
 - 4. Proficient
 - 5. Fully proficient
 - 6. N/A
6. How would you rate your Somali writing skills?
- a. Schools
 - 1. Least proficient
 - 2. Somewhat proficient
 - 3. Neutral
 - 4. Proficient
 - 5. Fully proficient
 - 6. N/A
 - b. Emailing/Blogging
 - 1. Least proficient
 - 2. Somewhat proficient
 - 3. Neutral
 - 4. Proficient
 - 5. Fully proficient
 - 6. N/A
 - c. Text-Messaging.
 - 1. Least proficient
 - 2. Somewhat proficient
 - 3. Neutral
 - 4. Proficient
 - 5. Fully proficient
 - 6. N/A
 - d. Letter's.
 - 1. Least proficient
 - 2. Somewhat proficient
 - 3. Neutral
 - 4. Proficient
 - 5. Fully proficient
 - 6. N/A

7. How would you rate your writing skills in the English language, in the following areas?

- a. School
 - 1. Least proficient
 - 2. Somewhat proficient
 - 3. Neutral
 - 4. Proficient
 - 5. Fully proficient
 - 6. N/A
- b. Emailing/Blogging
 - a. Least proficient
 - b. Somewhat proficient
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Proficient
 - e. Fully proficient
 - f. N/A
- c. Text-messaging
 - a. Least proficient
 - b. Somewhat proficient
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Proficient
 - e. Fully proficient
 - f. N/A
- d. Letters
 - a. Least proficient
 - b. Somewhat proficient
 - c. neutral
 - d. Proficient
 - e. Fully proficient
 - f. N/A

8. How would you rate your reading skill in the English language in the following areas?

- a. Newspaper
 - 1. Least proficient
 - 2. Somewhat proficient
 - 3. Neutral
 - 4. Proficient
 - 5. Fully proficient
 - 6. N/A
- b. Textbooks.
 - 1. Least proficient
 - 2. Somewhat proficient
 - 3. Neutral
 - 4. Proficient
 - 5. Fully proficient
 - 6. N/A

c. Novels

1. Least proficient
2. Somewhat proficient
3. Neutral
4. Proficient
5. Fully proficient
6. N/A

d. Holy Quran

1. Somewhat proficient
2. Somewhat proficient
3. Neutral
4. Proficient
5. Fully proficient
6. N/A

9. Listening Comprehension of the English language.

a. Music

1. Least proficient
2. Somewhat proficient
3. Neutral
4. Proficient
5. Fully Proficient
6. N/A

b. News

1. Least proficient
2. Somewhat proficient
3. Neutral
4. Proficient
5. Fully proficient
6. N/A

c. Sermons

1. Least proficient
2. Somewhat proficient
3. Neutral
4. Proficient
5. Fully proficient
6. N/A

d. Documentaries

1. Least proficient
2. Somewhat proficient
3. Neutral
4. Proficient
5. Fully proficient
6. N/A

10. How would you rate your speaking skill in English in the following areas?

- a. Public Speaking
 - 1. Least proficient
 - 2. Somewhat proficient
 - 3. Neutral
 - 4. Proficient
 - 5. Fully proficient
 - 6. N/A
- b. Academic discussions
 - 1. Least proficient
 - 2. Somewhat proficient
 - 3. Neutral
 - 4. Proficient
 - 5. Fully proficient
 - 6. N/A
- c. Debates
 - a. Least proficient
 - b. Somewhat proficient
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Proficient
 - e. Fully proficient
 - f. N/A
- d. Social conversations.
 - a. Least proficient
 - b. Somewhat proficient
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Proficient
 - e. Fully proficient
 - f. N/A
 - g.

11. List the places where you feel comfortable speaking Somali?

- a. Home
- b. School
- c. Hospitals
- d. Parks and reactions
- e. All of the above
- f. Others. _____

Appendix B: Language Log

Participant alias name:

Age:

Major:

Year: _____

[illegible]

Appendix C: Structure Interviews

Interview questions:

Alias Name:

Date:

Time:

Interviewer: Open ended questions:

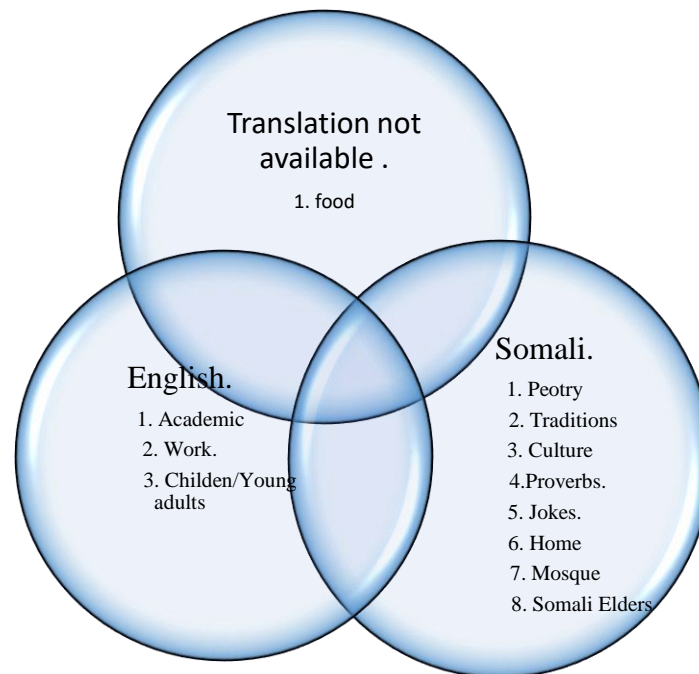
1. List the places where you wish you could speak Somali but Somali language was not available? And why do you wish you could speak Somali in these places?
2. Describe places where you feel safe speaking Somali? And what language do you not feel safe in speaking in these places?
3. If you were at the airport with a family member what language will you speak with them? Why?
4. What topics do you speak in Somali only? And what topics do you speak in English only
5. Is it easier or more difficult for you to talk about emotional topics in Somali or English language? If there is a difference, could you talk about that and perhaps provide some examples?
6. Does the phrase “I love you” have the same emotional weight for you in your different languages? Which language does it feel strongest in? And what language does it feel the least strong? And why?
7. Is there anything that you can describe in Somali but you are not able to describe it in English? And why? Also is there anything that you can describe in English but you are not able to describe it in Somali? And why?
8. Do you have a preference for emotional terms, and terms of endearment in one language over the other? Which language is it and why?
9. If you were to recall some bad or difficult memories, what language would you prefer to discuss them in? And why?
10. Do you have anything to add or that you like to say?

Appendix D: Language Used for Topics, Locations, and Generations

Abdirahman	
Topics	Language
Old Days in Somalia	Somali
Gas Station	English
Plans for the day	Somali
Friday Sermon	Somali and Arabic
Pre-dinner planning	English/Somali
Catching up with nephews and nieces	English
Dinner with friends	Somali/English
Abdulahi	
Topics	Language
Football	
Back Pain	English/Somali
NBA	English/Somali
Money	English/Somali
News from Twitter/Instagram	English/Somali
Family/All relatives Catching Up, Ramadan talks	English/Somali
Family, Mother(Day to Day life)	Somali
Farah	
Topics	Language
Getting hair cut	Somali
Buying Grocery	English
Talking to Mom	Somali
Buying clothes	Somali
Pick up family members from the airport	English
Discussing Trip over-seas	Somali
Work	English/Somali

Generation	Language used.
Abdirahman	
Grandmother	Somali
Nephew and nieces younger than me	English
Clerk at the Gas Station	English
Somali Friend about the same age	English/Somali
Somali Friend about the same age	English/Somali
Abdulahi	
Friend about the same age	English/Somali
Friend about the same age	English/Somali
Frriend about the same age	English/Somali
Friend about the same age	English/Somali

Abdirahman	
Location	Language
Home	Somali
Gas Station	English
Home	Somali
Mosque	Somali
Conference Call	English/Somali
Sisters House	English
Restaurant	English/Somali
Abdulahi	
Locations	Language
Home	English/Somali
Home	English/Somali
Home	English/Somali
Home	English/Somali
Park	English/Somali
Home	Somali
Home	Somali
Farah	
Locations	Language
Barbershop	English
Somali grocery store	Somali
Home	Somali
American clothing store	English
Home of relatives	Somali
Home of relatives	Somali

Appendix E: English, Somali, and Word that are Translatable

Appendix F: IRB Approval



Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South MC 204K, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Ali Hassan

Address 378 3rd Ave. South
St. Cloud, MN 56301

USA

Email: ahassan@stcloudstate.edu

Co-Investigator NA

Project Title: "Where did you Leave the Somali Language:" Language Usage and Identity of Somali Males in America

Advisor Michael Schwartz

IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION: Expedited Review-1

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.

-Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-3290 or email ri@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Institutional Official:

Dr. Marilyn Hart
Interim Associate Provost for Research
Dean of Graduate Studies

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SCSU IRB# 1584 - 1978

1st Year Approval Date: 5/17/2016

1st Year Expiration Date: 5/16/2017

Type: Expedited Review-1

2nd Year Approval Date:

2nd Year Expiration Date:

Today's Date: 5/18/2016

3rd Year Approval Date:

3rd Year Expiration Date: